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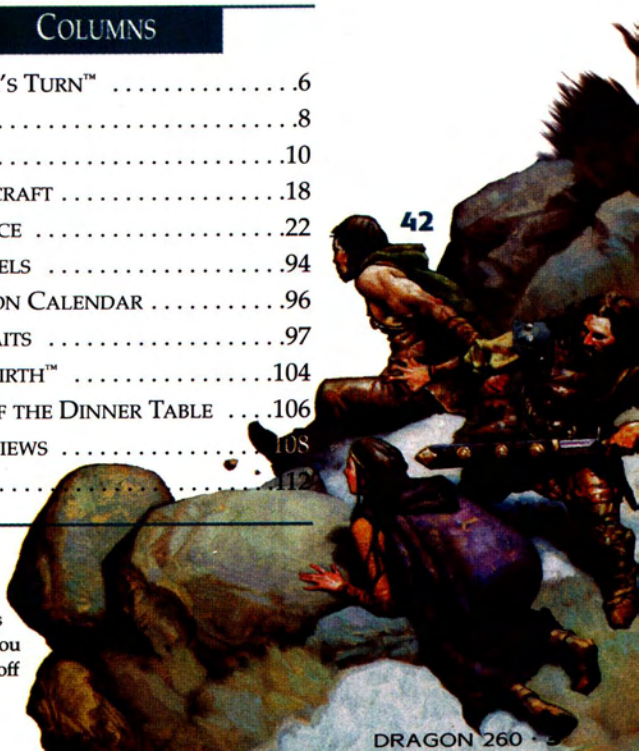

ON THE COVER

On most of our recent anniversary covers, we've been fortunate to have great dragons by veteran TSR illustrator Jeff Easley. This is another one of those years. For the past two decades, Jeff's dragons have defined the genre as they soared and roared at us from game boxes, book covers and more. If you missed our interview with Jeff in "ProFiles," issue #254, this would be a good time to pull that issue off the shelf.

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Your Inner Munchkin

Some hopeful powergamer just put his 88th-level Wizard up for auction on eBay for a minimum bid of $55. You've got to admire that sort of audacity.

It's easy to pick on the powergamers—munchkins, as we used to call them. Their stories of 100th-level half-drow Paladin/Assassins with golf bags full of *vorpal blades* and *lifestealing swords* are unquestionably silly. Secure in my own roleplaying maturity, I've often imagined that most munchkins eventually become more sophisticated roleplayers. If only it were that simple.

Recently, DUNGEON® *Adventures* editor Chris Perkins ran his *Planet of Darkness* adventure for the rest of the editorial staff. While the other guys designed ALTERNITY® game characters capable of obliterating a squad of stormtroopers single-handedly, I made Maximillian Vane, a pilot/trader with lots of Intelligence and Personality skills. He was a 3'-tall ladies' man with bright red hair and an ego the size of a capital ship. Max was a roleplayer's character, no good in a fight, but perfect for a player who wanted to prove himself above such petty concerns as damage adjustments and multiple attacks.

Playing Max was plenty of fun … until the action broke out. Sure, there were moments of comic relief as the little guy became a struggling hostage in the first conflict, then scampered away from a big firefight. It was even funny that he spent the rest of that day's action as a voice on the other end of a commlink, safely closeted in a hotel room.

Eventually, however, I began to wish I could wade in like Chris Carlson's weren, punching out VoidCorp thugs right through the windshields of their aircar. Earlier, I'd teased Chris about min-maxing his mighty warrior. Now, a little voice inside me was crying out for a miniature body tank and a starsword. I think I recognized that voice.

It was my inner munchkin, and it wanted out.

The local park in my hometown has a neat legend on the back of its sign, so you see it when you're leaving—a reminder aimed at those returning home to pay the bills, feed the dog, and run a few loads of laundry before bed. It reads: "You don't stop playing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop playing."

That sign has been a beacon for me in my adult life—not to mention Exhibit A when I've had to justify my hobby (and job) to a girlfriend's parents. Lately, though, I realized that I'd lost sight of the real meaning of that sign. I was playing the character I thought I *should* play, not the one I *wanted* to play.

To stay young, it's not enough just to play. Indulge yourself, let go of your inhibitions, and forget the notion that "roleplaying" is inherently superior to "roll-playing." Dust off that old copy of your own 88th-level Wizard.

Let your inner munchkin take over next time you're gaming. At worst, you'll have a few laughs. At best, you'll have a lot more fun.

Dragon®

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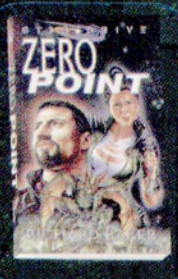

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Question of the Month

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What one house rule has had the most significant impact on your AD&D® campaign?

A Magical System

In Issue #254 Geoffrey Plauche wrote that one of the things he would like to see changed in the AD&D® game is the spellcasting system, specifically because he has "never liked that a Mage forgets a spell after casting it, and the AD&D game is the only game I have found so far in which this occurs."

In my experience there is no other system in the AD&D game that has been subjected to as much patching and fixing by DMs as the magic system—often for the reason Geoffrey cites: A lot of people consider Mages' forgetting spells to be silly and unbelievable.

While I too have fiddled with this system in the past, allow me to make a few points in its defense. Defenders of this system sometimes say, "Magic isn't real, so why should it be believable?" This argument is questionable, since suspension of disbelief is essential regardless of what genre your game employs—magic might not be real, but it should be plausible. My defense of the spell system rests on the principle that the system works just fine; it's the explanation that is flawed.

A system in which a character compiles a list of spells at the beginning of the day, can cast each of those spells once, and then must spend some time resting before compiling a new list of spells is a system that not only works but that is neither superior nor inferior to other options, such as the popular alternative of a spell-point system.

Then what's the problem? The problem is the explanation tacked onto the memorization system. Mages are described as memorizing spells and then forgetting them when they are cast, forcing them to rememorize them. Naturally people find this explanation confusing and lame. If you memorize something, you've memorized it; you don't forget things you've memorized. That's the whole point behind memorizing them in the first place. People also find it incredible that Mages could spend decades memorizing the same spell over and over and over again, yet never commit it to memory.

The problem here lies entirely in the term "memorization," which sends a confusing message. A Mage doesn't memorize a spell in the same sense that, for example, an actor memorizes his lines. "Memorizing" a spell is something quite different, and using the same term is naturally confusing.

The solution? Find a more accurate description of what a Mage does to prepare a spell for casting. My suggestion is to describe the process like this:

Casting a spell is a complicated process that takes several hours to perform. If it takes twenty minutes for a Mage to cast a *magic missile* spell, however, then that spell isn't worth much in a pinch. To surmount this problem Wizards have developed a process by which they cast most of a spell ahead of time, leaving only the last few details to be added at the time of the actual casting.

This altered description is logical, intuitive, and (most importantly) believable. Best of all, it requires no significant changes to the system itself. A few minor changes could be added if desired (such as adding a provision allowing a Mage to cast any spell at any time, so long as the Mage is willing to take the time to do so), but these would not be troublesome or even necessary.

Justin Bacon
Minneapolis, MN

A Look at Priestly Magic

I am writing in response to your Question of the Month regarding the need for 8th- and 9th-level Priest spells. I believe that they are definitely not necessary for several reasons. Just the thought of needing 8th- and 9th-level spells makes me want to laugh.

First of all, I want to know who is playing these high-level Priests that require spells above 7th level. In my eleven years of playing the AD&D game, 99.9% of the time was spent playing characters of low- to mid-level (i.e., 14th level or lower). Most DMs I know have never had a character of any class rise above 12th level in any of their campaigns. The point is, high-level spells are nice to look at, but how often do players stay with one campaign long enough to cast them?

My second reason for believing that 8th- and 9th-level Priest spells are unnecessary is that Quest spells for Priests have adequately fulfilled any need for divine magic beyond 7th level. Quest spells can do some amazingly powerful things, and they help balance a Priest's powers with a Wizard's 8th- and 9th-level spells.

A larger variety of general low-level spells would help Priests more than high-level magics. It's true that many accessories include new Priest spells, but they are often deity specific and therefore unusable by most Clerics. The biggest problem with playing a Priest character is the Priest's lack of effective combat spells. The *Player's Handbook* is woefully lacking in useful Priest spells, while the *Wizard's Spell Compendium* seems to have a spell for every occasion.

In conclusion, I'd like to see a broader selection of low-level spells

rather than 8th- and 9th-level Priest spells. I hope other gamers out there sympathize with my desire for a more balanced selection of priestly magic.

Matthew Avery
Berkeley, CA

The Powers of Faith

I am writing to agree with Dennis Rose on his observation that Wizards are very weak in the AD&D game and, moreover, that Priests are very powerful!

Did you ever compare the Priest and Wizard classes? First of all, Priests have more spells available. They have no need for spell books and gain bonuses for having a Wisdom of only 13. They might have a chance of failing a spell, but only if their Wisdom is 12 or lower, and almost every character I have seen has at least a 13 in the prime requisite. Take, for example, a score of 16. You could either put it in Intelligence and be a Wizard (70% chance to learn spells), or put it in Wisdom, and be a Priest (a bonus of two 1st-level spells and two 2nd-level spells). The choice is obvious. Also, Priests need not learn their spells as Wizards do, so they always have useful spells at their fingertips.

Secondly, Priests are much more powerful in combat. Priests have a much wider range of weapons than Wizards (although it is still quite limited), and they can wear armor and cast spells at the same time. They also have double the hit points that a Wizard does, and Priests can cure wounds.

Third, to gain second level, a Wizard needs to earn 2,500 experience points, while a Priest needs to earn only 1,500. Wizards are much weaker than Priests until about 7th level (by which time the Priest is equal in power to the Wizard). I know that Wizards advance faster from that point upward, but they are still quite weak.

Oh, and comparing the spells of the two classes, the Wizard's are slightly more powerful, but they are so hard to acquire that the spell selection for the two classes is about the same.

The way I have remedied this in my campaign is by allowing Wizards to use the *Spells & Magic* spell point system but denying it to Priests.

Jon Schmunk
Gleason, WI

A Simple Charm

I'd like to address the question of the month from issue #255. Of the three best spells in the AD&D game, *fireball* tops the list. The AD&D game just wouldn't be the same without *fireball*. It's a classic, and no spellbook should be without it. Second place goes to the entire group of clerical healing spells such as *cure light wounds*, *cure serious wounds*, and the like. If Wizards are walking *fireball* throwers, then a Cleric's job is to heal the injured.

Choosing the last spell is trickier. I would have to rule out the high-level *wish*, *enchant an item*, or *permanency* spells. Although the backbone of myth and legend, these spells are beyond the ability of the average Wizard. And, upon being able to cast them, the cost in time and life force makes them unpopular for PCs. It is often easier to go adventuring for a ready-made item rather than manufacturing it. *Read magic*, being a requirement for all other magic, is an obvious if trivial and uninteresting choice.

Therefore, my choice is the humble *charm person* spell. True, depending upon the campaign, this can be a less effective spell. In one campaign, the verbal and somatic components for *charm person* were essentially jumping up and down and screaming to everyone in the area, "I'm trying to *charm* your friend." Needless to say, this attracted large, hostile crowds. However, if casting the spell becomes a more reasonable action—say, extending a hand in handshake ("How's it going, *friend*?"), proffering a small gift, or giving a rose to a lady—casting the spell becomes the logical way to meet all NPCs.

While the adventurers buy their equipment, *charm* the weaponsmith, the armorer, and the barkeep. *Charm* everyone. The NPCs become the party's dear and trusting friends. This is the only goal: immediate friendship. Having acquired their friendship, don't abuse it. It is the stereotypical barkeep's job to be everyone's friend. Part of his job is to give away a few beers. No big deal, no life and death risk here. You buy a few beers; he gives you a few beers. Perhaps you'll have a 10% discount on your dagger purchase, and maybe the armorer will throw in an extra shield for the fighter when he buys his chainmail. The key is to not ask for too much. These are your friends, so treat them as such.

When the *charm* wears off, there's no reason for the NPCs to be hostile. After all, what could be a better boon to the local weaponsmith than to have your band of adventurers' future business? Further, while drinking at the inn prior to adventuring, a local or two can be *charmed* into joining your group.

Brett Paufler
Danville, CA

***The AD&D game just wouldn't be the same without* fireball.**

Wimpy Dragons

I just wanted to take a moment to comment on something that has been bothering me for quite a few years: the lack of reality to the hit-point system that has been allotted to dragons. Come on! You can't really expect a 480'-long lizard to have only 149 hp. This example comes from the module *A Paladin in Hell*, which is otherwise excellent.

A human Fighter can achieve those hit points and be nowhere near as big, powerful, old, or mean as a dragon. I understand that the dragon's AC is low, thus making it harder to hit, but in the aforementioned module, characters start at 15th to 20th level. A 20th-level Fighter has no problem putting a serious smack on a dragon. Might I add that the normal human male is only around 5'8"–6"' tall? Compare that to a dragon bigger than a football field with the same amount of hit points. That's an average of about 1 hp per 4 feet of dragon. If all were equal, the human should have only approximately 2 hp, since he's much younger and smaller.

Jade Murphy
Austin, TX

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More Skills & Powers

I'd like to see more *Skills & Powers* articles. Issue #256 was terrific, especially "Rogue Heroes," giving my players more options when creating their characters. Other than this and a small handful of past articles (the *Skills & Powers* for Cerilian characters, some new options for Priests, and a brief conversion for Psionicists in *DRAGON® Magazine* Annual #2), this exciting version of the AD&D® game has seen little press in the magazine.

Don't forget the Skills & Powers *articles for the PLANESCAPE® (in issue #235) and DARK SUN (in Annual #1) settings. While both are campaign specific, the individual abilities are easily imported to your own world.*

We're not done with Skills & Powers *articles. There's one lined up for the October issue, and we're always looking for more.*

In future issues, new psionic powers should be presented, they should be presented using the new rules from the *Skills & Powers* book ...

My group is currently running a *Skills & Powers* campaign (with a few house rules, of course) and is enjoying it a great deal.

Another topic I'd like to see covered is Psionics. Issue #255 was terrific in that it offered new kits for Psionicist PCs and new powers for Ninja Psionicists. In future issues, new psionic powers should be presented using the new rules from the *Skills & Powers* book (MACs and MTHAC0s). The Shinobi-Psionicist kit offered some interesting new powers, but they were in the *Complete Book of Psionics* format, not consistent with the rules presented in *Skills & Powers* and the revised DARK SUN® setting.

Aside from these things, I think the magazine is doing a great job. Thank you for many years of great reading, tips, and entertainment.

C. Neil Roach
deaconblue@hotmail.com

Chuff Stuff

In the ALTERNITY® game article on the mechalus (in issue #250), the chuff weapon system is incomplete, with no weight or magazine size given for the weapons. Since these are mechalus weapons, I am surprised they seem inferior to the stutter weapon system.

Max Buckner
Tukwila, WA

"World of the Mechalus" author Wolfgang Baur provides the answer:

Chuff rifle magazines hold 30 rounds; the rifles themselves weigh 3 kg and have no hide value modifier. Standard paralytic rounds cost about 75 Concord dollars per clip if bought from the mechalus or from a Rigunmor Star Consortium merchant. Acid rounds cost 200 Concord dollars. The cost of either type of ammunition is tripled outside the Consortium. The older (and illegal) toxin, EMP, and WP rounds are rarely for sale, and the cost is whatever the market will bear.

Pistol clips follow the same pattern, though they are slightly less expensive: 17 rounds, 30 Concord dollars for paralytic, 90 for acid rounds. They weight less than 1 kg and have a hide value of +3.

Note that both paratoxin and nanite rounds have a limited shelf life of about three months, if stored properly. After that, the rounds degrade, and their special effects no longer function. These rounds still inflict normal stun and wound damage.

Every Rogue's a Hero

I am writing about the outstanding "Rogue Heroes" article from issue #256. I just started playing a Bard under a new DM. I had never run a Bard before (I usually DM) and was a little worried I wouldn't be able to pull it off. But after reading Mark Hart's work, I was excited about the challenge. Great job, Mark.

I especially liked the idea of Rogue points. As a DM, I let all characters use CPs for the same thing, but Rogues need more of an edge to survive and gain that much-needed reputation. Also, the nonweapon proficiency packages are an excellent idea. Reading over them helped me decide how my character's background would affect which skills he had.

I am glad to see that *DRAGON Magazine* has brought back articles on miniatures. "Through the Looking Glass" used to be my favorite feature. I am an avid painter and would like to see more on the subject. How would I go about submitting painting guides or miniature house rules?

Robert K. Young
Midland TX

While we have "Role Models" articles lined up for some time to come, you can still submit an article on painting or miniatures house rules. Check out the

writers' guidelines at www.tsr.com or send an SASE to the magazine address for a paper copy.

Short Shrift for Bards

Currently I am enjoying my first subscription to *DRAGON Magazine*, but I have been collecting it off and on for a good fifteen years. I thoroughly enjoy articles like issue #247's "Taltos"—a fantastic new Rogue sub-class that I fully intend to play—and issue #256 was one I was really looking forward to. Imagine my disappointment when I noticed that it was wonderful for Rogue PCs but rather lacking for sub-classes like Bards. The *Skills & Powers* article barely added anything of substance to the Bard, and the only article I found applicable to my favorite PC class was the Arcane Lore, "Haunting Melodies."

Overall, the issue was a disappointment for someone who prefers to play Rogue characters with more substance than normal Thieves. Unfortunately, I think I'm noting a trend for at least two sub-classes that, although they're clear favorites of both myself and most of my friends, get short shrift in the magazine. These are the Bard and the Ranger. Paladins get quite a bit of attention (see issues #257, #243, and #236), Psionicists even more, Mages and Fighters too. This is truly disappointing, especially when I realize my subscription to the magazine is already half over. I would dearly love to see Bards and Rangers get the single issue dedications that Mages, Fighters, Psionicists, Thieves, and Paladins have had, especially when so many gamers enjoy these classes.

So, in interest of Bard and Ranger lovers everywhere, please heed my plea and give us more possibilities (yes, I did catch the article on the Dandy and Outlaw Bards—loved them!) for our Bards, Rangers, and while you're at it, Illusionists. Stop giving these popular subclasses such short shrift. Thank you.

Christopher D. Blamires
Norman, OK

We don't have a special issue for Rangers and Bards in the near future, but fear not: We'll make a special effort to find such articles, since Christopher's points are well taken. In the meantime, we'd like to hear from everyone what classes you'd like to see covered most often in these pages.

Revisiting the Dark Ages

Well, I don't know about history buffs, but there were many points in Ian Malcomson's account of the British Dark Ages that irritated me. I could shoot lots of holes in it (e.g., why is Bernicia shown as a British kingdom on the map? Buellt = Builth is in the wrong place. It's Chi / ternsaetas, "dwellers in the Chiltern hills." Why take the Dark Ages up to 1066? What is the evidence that the pagan Anglo-Saxon rulers—quite uncharacteristically for any polytheistic group—imposed their religion on British subjects?), but here are the complaints that I think are most relevant.

Those who lived in the province(s) of Britannia (not Britannicus!) were all Roman citizens, after the emperor Caracalla pronounced virtually everyone in the empire citizens in the early third century A.D. As for being "one of the richest jewels in the Roman Empire's crown," read John James's *The Bridge of Sand* for a much more plausible attitude. I doubt the Roman Empire ever made a profit from Britain.

I do not understand the distinction between Britons and Celts; all the inhabitants of southern Britain, up to the line of Hadrian's Wall and probably some way beyond, spoke the same language, and all were part of the Roman Empire. The Picts spoke something similar (but the Roman Empire never controlled all of Scotland, rarely even part of it). Only the Irish, from whom the Dalriada Scots derived, spoke a completely different variant of Celtic, the ancestor of Gaelic, which spread over much of Scotland only with the uniting of the kingdoms of Picts and Scots.

The information on Anglo-Saxon weapons is definitely misleading. The sword with two straight edges was a common weapon, as correctly shown being worn or wielded in the illustrations on the cover and page 28, and it should be made clear that the seax and scramaseax (reckoned to be the same thing, according to my wife, a specialist in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, who always pronounces it 'sax' by the way—much easier) were one-edged weapons, more like large battle knives, though not as long as a true sword. The ax was not a significant weapon, judging from what was buried with the dead, and is found only in early

Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
GOOD PEOPLE! YOU ARE NOW FREE OF THE IRON-FISTED REIGN OF COUNT REPUGSIVE!
SADLY, HOWEVER, OUR SEARCH OF HIS CASTLE DIDN'T TURN UP ANY OF THE TREASURE HE EXTORTED FROM YOU ALL THESE YEARS.
BUT-- MMMPH!
THEN WHAT'S HE CARRYING?
IT'S, UH... LAUNDRY.
YOU CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MANY SOCKS!
TELLING THE TRUTH WOULD DETONATE YOUR HEAD, WOULDN'T IT?
SHUT UP.

(5th–6th century A.D.) contexts.

I grow tired of seeing suggestions that Rome was gone after the fifth century (though the legions certainly were no more; the late Roman army was not organized in legions or cohorts). The city of Rome fell for the first time in 410 A.D., but the western Roman empire lasted, at least in name, for several decades after that. The eastern Roman empire, with Constantinople as the capital, survived intact, temporarily regained control of Africa, Italy, and Sicily in the sixth century, and was still a great power in 1066. From a gaming point of view, it should be a great power known to most characters, assuming a reasonable knowledge of the world.

If you think these criticisms are nitpicking, try running something of this kind on Bronze Age and early Iron Age Greece, my area of greatest expertise!

Oliver Dickinson
York, England

The story of the English Dark Ages is very much the tale of the rise of the Germanic peoples following the withdrawal of Rome.

Hey, Oliver! Pitch us a proposal for those Bronze Age and Iron Age articles. In the meantime, here's Ian's response:

The kingdom of Bernicia is indeed labeled incorrectly as being a British kingdom. This was something that escaped us—so apologies. However, the map description text correctly gives Bernicia as a Germanic kingdom.

Buellt/Builth is in the correct position accounting for the fact that the map is not corrected for longitude.

The region identified as Chintern Saeten is given several different names in record. You aren't wrong, but neither am I.

The year 1066 provides a logical cut-off date for Anglo-Saxon dominion over England, since the story of the English Dark Ages is very much the tale of the rise of the Germanic peoples following the withdrawal of Rome.

The evidence for the imposition of the polytheistic pagan faith is in the recorded archaeology of the period. There are several sites where Britons have been buried with household religious objects pertaining to the Germanic faith over either those of Roman Christian, resurging pre-Roman, or early Roman pagan faiths.

I disagree with the idea that imposition of polytheistic religion is uncharacteristic. The Romans, for instance, did so with the Britons after the Conquest, and such imposition can also be found in the history of the unification of the Egyptian kingdoms.

The only place Britannicus is used is on the map to indicate the English Channel, and this is in keeping with the labeling methods of several old English cartographers (e.g., John Speed).

The people of Britain were treated as second-class citizens during the occupation, despite Caracalla's "constitutio Antoniniana" of 212. Britain was on the edge of the Empire and was seen more as a resource. Also, the fact that Britain was so readily abandoned virtually whole-scale by the Romans provides a good indicator of the Roman attitude to the native Britons.

As for the wealth of Britain as a province: Initially, the Romans wanted to invade Britain to prevent the British Celts from aiding Gaul. When they finally gained Britain, they went to great lengths to retain it (prior, that is, to the withdrawal). Both Hadrian's and the Antonine Walls, and the appointment of Carausius in 286 show this. Allectus was proclaimed Emperor in Britain, and Magnus Maximus went to some lengths to gain the province from Theodosius.

The activity of the Empire in Britain over nearly four hundred years of occupation, the archaeology of the period indicating the wealth and prosperity of the Romans that settled here, and the legacies still evident today all provide a picture of a land of good resource.

The distinction between Briton and Celt comes not from language but from the level of Roman influence received by the cultures. As noted in the article, the Welsh and Irish are defined as Celtic—retaining much of their pre-Roman character during and after the occupation. The Britons, again as defined in the article, are the ancestors of those originally Celtic tribes who were more greatly influenced than their neighbors. It is a distinction of general cultural characteristic, rather than one of linguistic basis.

The scramaseax and seax were indeed single-edged but separate weapons. The scramaseax was roughly 1 foot long (but could vary from the size of a small eating knife upward), and the seax approached 2 ½ feet in length (hence, the rough equating to AD&D daggers and short swords, respectively). They are often lumped together because of their similar shape, but there is definitely a size difference.

As for axes, it is true that they are found less often in burials than either seax or scramaseax (roughly 3% of weapons finds over 5% for the seax/scramaseax), but the writings of the period (e.g., the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in its various guises) give the weapon more coverage than such finds suggest. In the case of this weapon, I went with the contemporary literature and the movie depictions of the Anglo-Saxons rather than with the archaeology.

While it is true that the Eastern Roman Empire lasted until 1453, the Western Empire ended in 476. The article notes this point in the Campaigning in the Dark Ages section, citing that the Empire was no more roughly a century after the withdrawal from Britain. The focus of the article was on Britain and was necessarily introspective. The Eastern Empire had little to do with Britain until the twelfth century, and Rome itself, beyond 476, retained political power only through Christianity, as highlighted in the Chronology by the influence of Augustine and Paulinus, and the Synod of Whitby of 664. Since the point of this article was to describe history and culture of Britain, with a dash of legend and mythology, rather than religious matters or a global view of Europe, the Roman Empire and its divisions were beyond its scope.

You have made several good points, but the article does recommend that anyone wishing to use the source for a historically based campaign should carry out further research. It would take far more than a single article to deal with the subject exhaustively.

I hope I have provided answers to your criticisms enough that you might look again at the material in a more favorable light.

More Dark Ages Quibbles

I enjoyed Ian Malcomson's article on gaming in the British "Dark Ages"

because I have been working up a campaign like that myself. I have only a few minor quibbles.

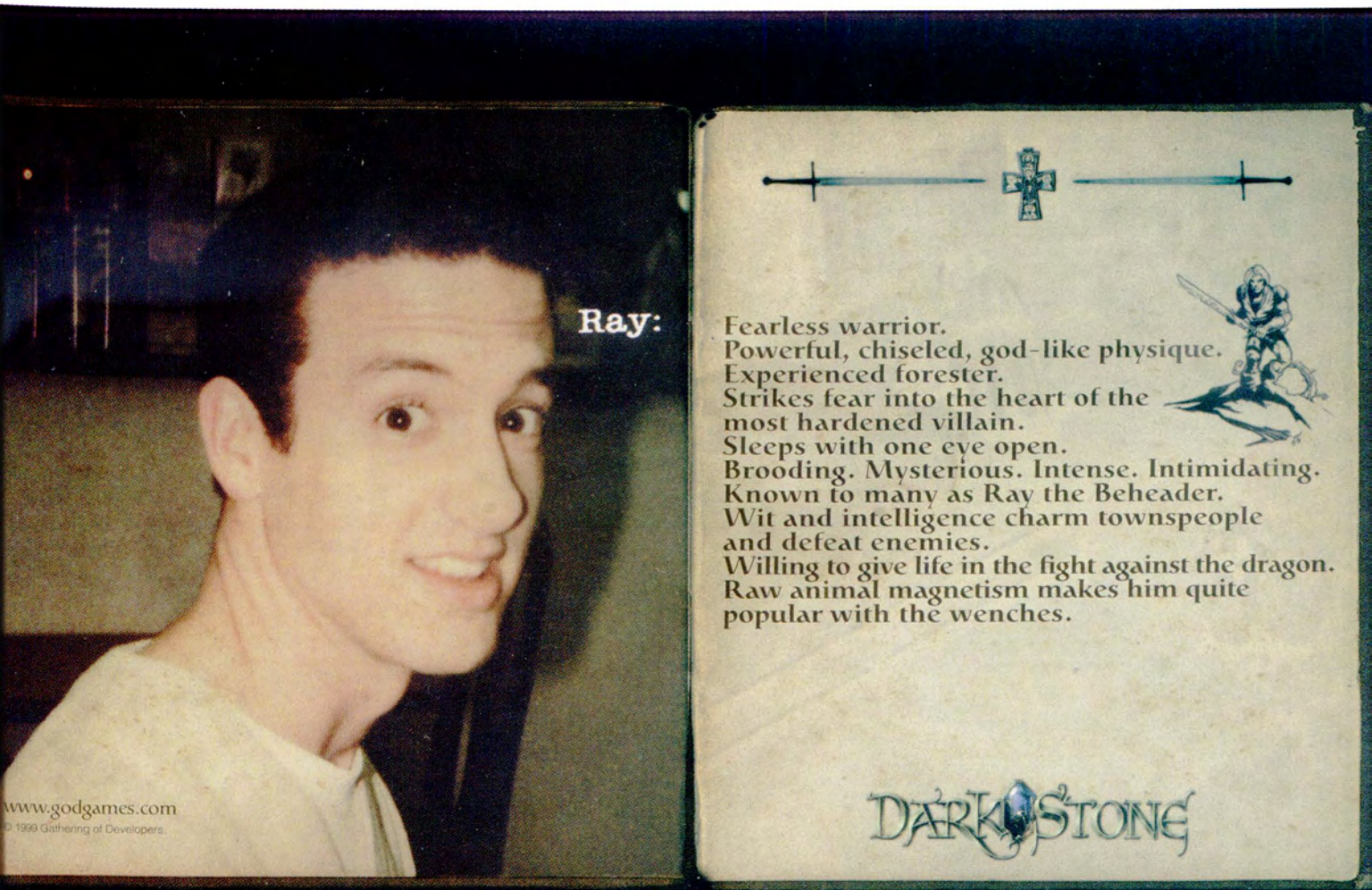
First, in the Priest Kits, the Tribal Priest is said to be "restricted in weapon proficiency depending on the description provided for the deity he worships." But pagan priests (at least what we can surmise of Anglo-Saxon paganism from the sources) were not allowed to bear arms at all. In fact, when Bede describes the conversion of Edwin, led by the pagan high-priest Coifi, it is clear that Coifi's decision to don arms and cast a spear into the pagan temple is a gesture of defiance in the face of the old ways. While some players, ever against the restrictions on clerical arms, insist that it is a restriction imposed by Western Christendom, this is not the case.

By the same token, the comment that "Tribal Priests may not be Christian in faith" seems obvious but is not necessarily born out by the evidence. Raedwald, King of East Anglia and a Bretwalda, was known, following his "conversion" at the behest of King Aethelbert of Kent, to operate a pagan temple right beside the new Christian Church. Certainly this could not have been encouraged by the early Christian missionaries, but they probably had to tolerate more than a few instances of cross-over worship. The *Beowulf* poet himself complains about the backsliding of Hrothgar's people in the face of the attacks by Grendel. Surely there were plenty of pagan priests who played both sides—handling such opportunism is a DM's own decision, although there is at least one suggestion about the fate awaiting such opportunists in the third canto of Dante's *Inferno*!

Second, while the depiction of Penda, King of the Mercians, as a Lawful Evil prince can be supported by the historical record, given the perspective of men like Bede, the notion that "a Christian missionary operating within the early Mercian kingdom may well find himself the target of insults, and a number of much sharper implements, for daring to speak out against the revered German pantheon" is a little misleading. Penda, a pagan to the end, had little quarrel with the Christian faith in theory, and he is supposed to have remarked that the faith would be perfectly good if its followers would only live up to their own principles. He offered no resistance to missionaries wishing to win converts among his people.

In fact, the role of the grand villain of these early days might well go to Aethelfrith, King of Northumbria, who (probably between 613 and 615) defeated the Britons at the Battle of Chester, where he also ordered the slaughter of more than two thousand monks and others from Bangor Iscoed for praying for a British victory. Aethelfrith was later killed by Raedwald after attempting to convince the East Anglian king to murder the exiled Edwin of Deira. His thinking, all around, betrays a certain ruthless logic—in game terms, surely the logic of Lawful Evil.

Finally, the douty and ever-delightful Brother Cadfael was not the brain child of "Peter Ellis" but Ellis Peters, which was of course the pen name of the late,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great Dame Edith Pargeter, who is surely even now sipping mulled wine with the worldly herbalist of the Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Aside from these minor quibbles, the article was a very nice one, and I hope to see more ideas about the Dark Ages published in *Dragon Magazine* soon!

Marc Mazzone
Nashville, TN
mazzonem@harpo.tnstate.edu

Once more from Ian:

The Tribal Priest kit is meant to portray all manner of non-Christian Priests of the period, including Celtic, Danish, and Viking Priests as well as Anglo-Saxons. Several Priests from these groups were not barred from carrying or using arms—hence the caveat that weapon restrictions should be based on the deity or faith followed.

Although there are instances of pagan and Christian faiths operating simultaneously in the same area (such as our example of East Anglia), it is likely that these faiths would have a separate priesthood (or individual) administering the different churches and temples. Thus, while an individual worshiper might be pagan and Christian simultaneously, Priests may not.

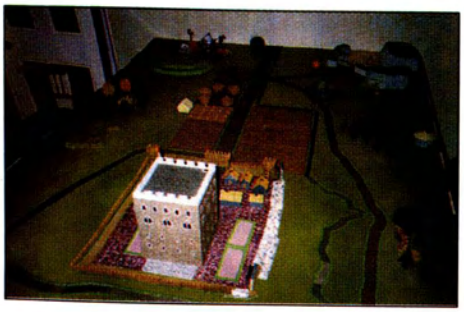
Penda is given the title of "grand villain" in the article simply because his exploits were more famed than those of Aethelfrith (or Ethelfrith), his presence in the Anglo-Saxon world had more longevity, and his story represents much of the more spiritual struggle between pagan and Christian faiths (e.g., in the battles of Heathfield and Heavenfield).

Finally, you are correct about Ellis Peters being the true author of the Cadfael series. I apologize for this mistake. [And so does the editor, who is quite ashamed that he didn't catch and correct the mistake.]

A Miniature Hobby

Reading Jeff Ibach's letter on playing with miniatures set me thinking. Starting from a straight wargaming background, I have been playing fantasy roleplaying games for at least eighteen years. Playing with miniatures and adequate scenery is the only way to keep my interest in the game.

In Britain, I think we have been fortunate to have many fantasy figures available, and I have amassed quite a collection. I realize that beginners



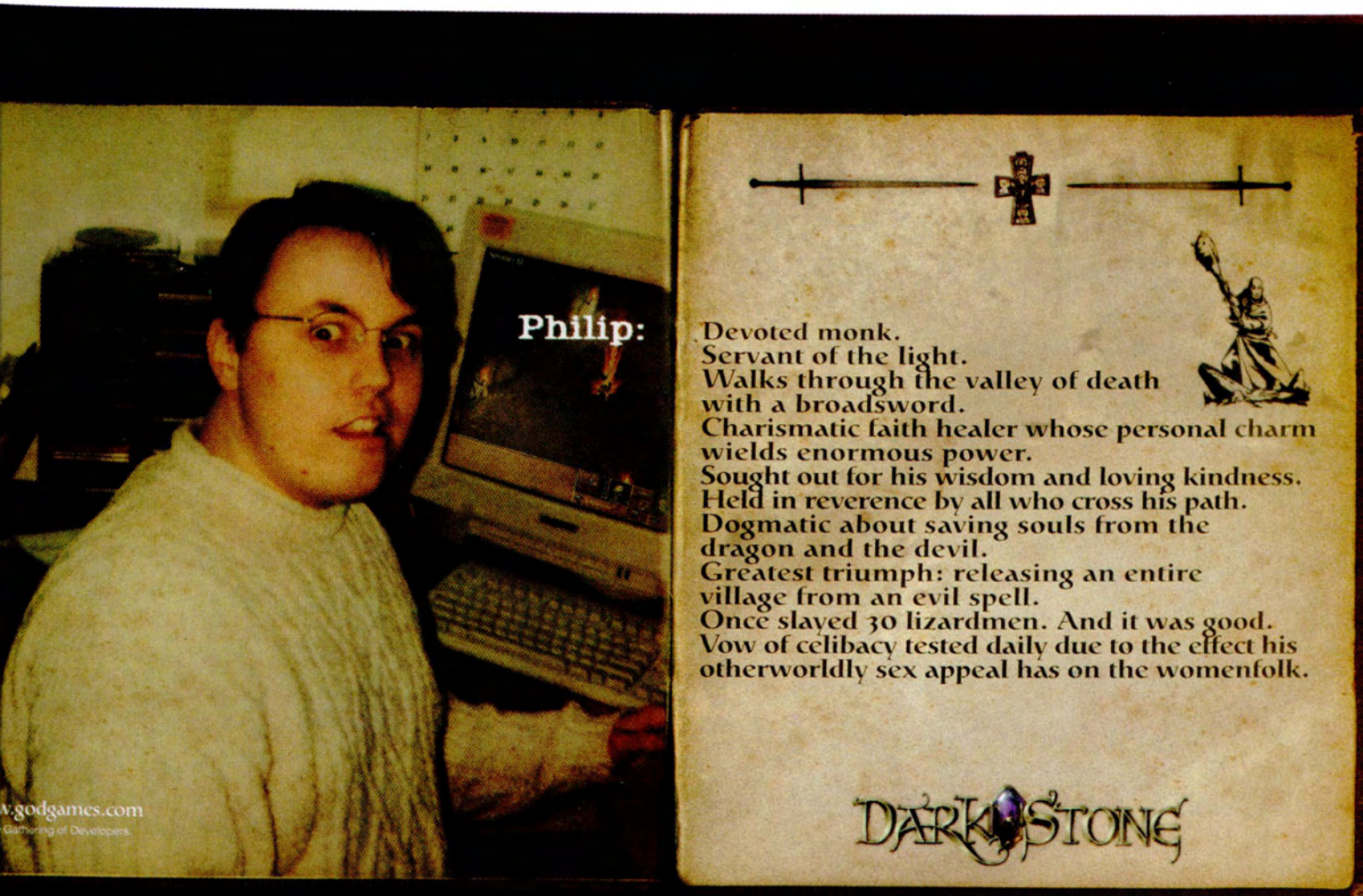
cannot afford to purchase and paint every monster needed. I consider it essential that figures be used for the player characters. Monsters can be represented by nearly anything, as long as the size is fairly accurate. Then even if only a paper layout of the scene is used, the positions and ranges of the combatants are easily determined. If steeds are used, there should be mounted figures available. Recently a party of eleven had to lead their steeds (twelve horses and two unicorns) single file through a forest. On the table they stretched 27 inches. Think of how delightfully vulnerable they were.

With miniatures, the DM can show details of a scene not readily apparent, or he can make the players roll to notice hidden or half-hidden items. I use what I call "mystic dice" for this. These are two dice painted with symbols; one has the four elements plus male and female. To use the dice, the DM reads the values from a table according to the symbol combination thrown. It could be from 1 to 36 if desired. The advantage of this is that the player does not know whether he has thrown low or high, whether to continue searching, or what unpleasantness has been triggered.

While a fortune in money and time can be spent creating scenery, there are cheap short cuts. I have a vast collection of paths, tracks, roads, ditches, brooks, streams, rivers, ponds, moats, plowed

fields, and other scenery painted on cereal box cardboard. Hills and suitably distorted crags are easily made from scrap polystyrene. Tents can be made from paper. Wonderfully gnarled dead trees can be made from old heather twigs, and it is as cheap to pick up a variety of standing stones. I make buildings from stout card in batches to simplify design. I have some white, Mediterranean-style buildings that have been used for fantasy, ancient, medieval, napoleonic, WWII, and American gangster scenarios without looking out of place.

John Mumford
West Lothian, Scotland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Devoted monk.
Servant of the light.
Walks through the valley of death with a broadsword.
Charismatic faith healer whose personal charm wields enormous power.
Sought out for his wisdom and loving kindness.
Held in reverence by all who cross his path.
Dogmatic about saving souls from the dragon and the devil.
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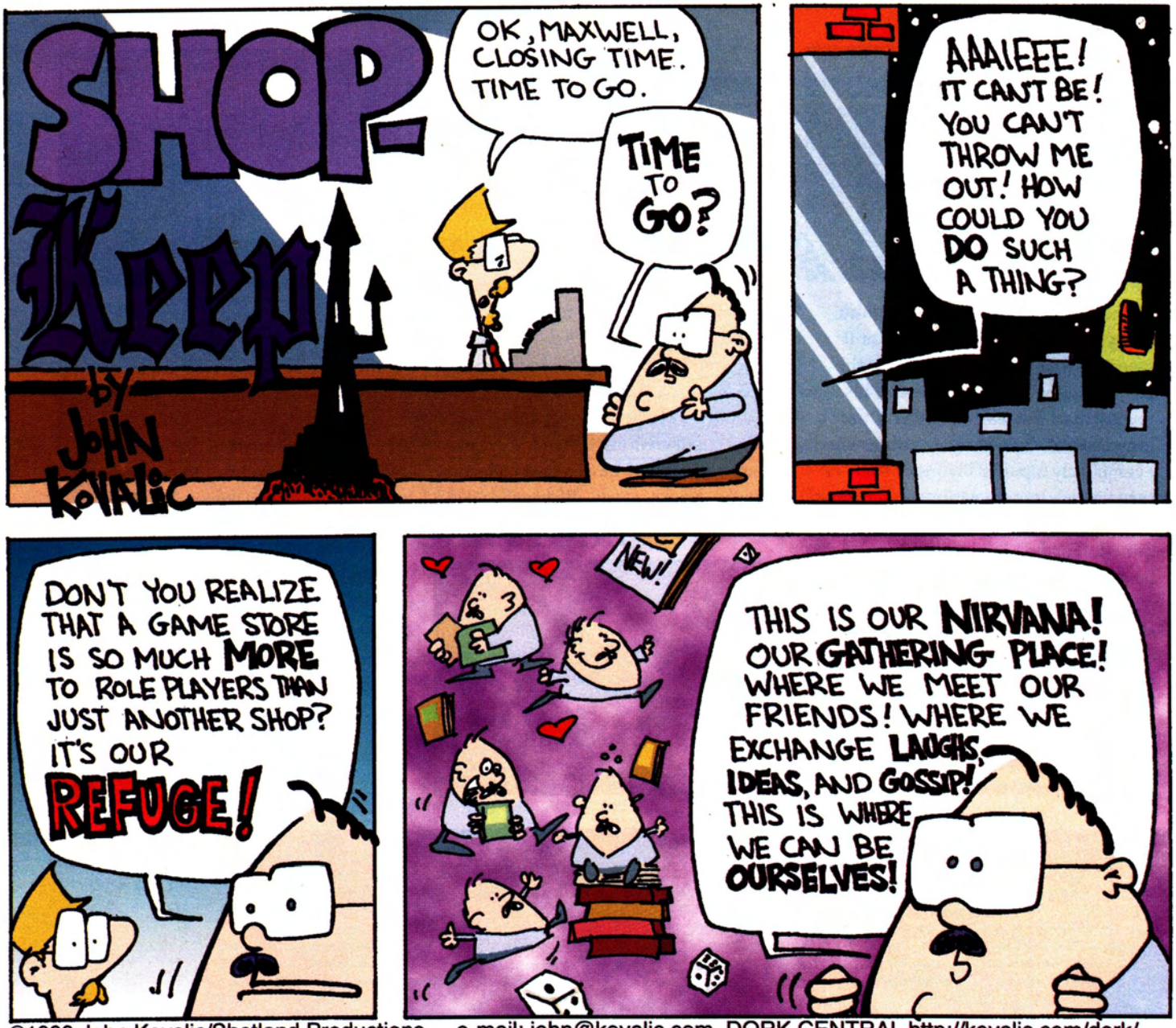
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by JOHN KOVALIC
OK, MAXWELL, CLOSING TIME. TIME TO GO.
TIME TO GO?
AAAIEEE! IT CAN'T BE! YOU CAN'T THROW ME OUT! HOW COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING?
DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT A GAME STORE IS SO MUCH MORE TO ROLE PLAYERS THAN JUST ANOTHER SHOP? IT'S OUR REFUGE!
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THIS ISN'T A STORE. IT'S A SANCTUARY!
I'M TOUCHED, MAXWELL.
THANK YOU.
BUT YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR THREE WEEKS NOW ...
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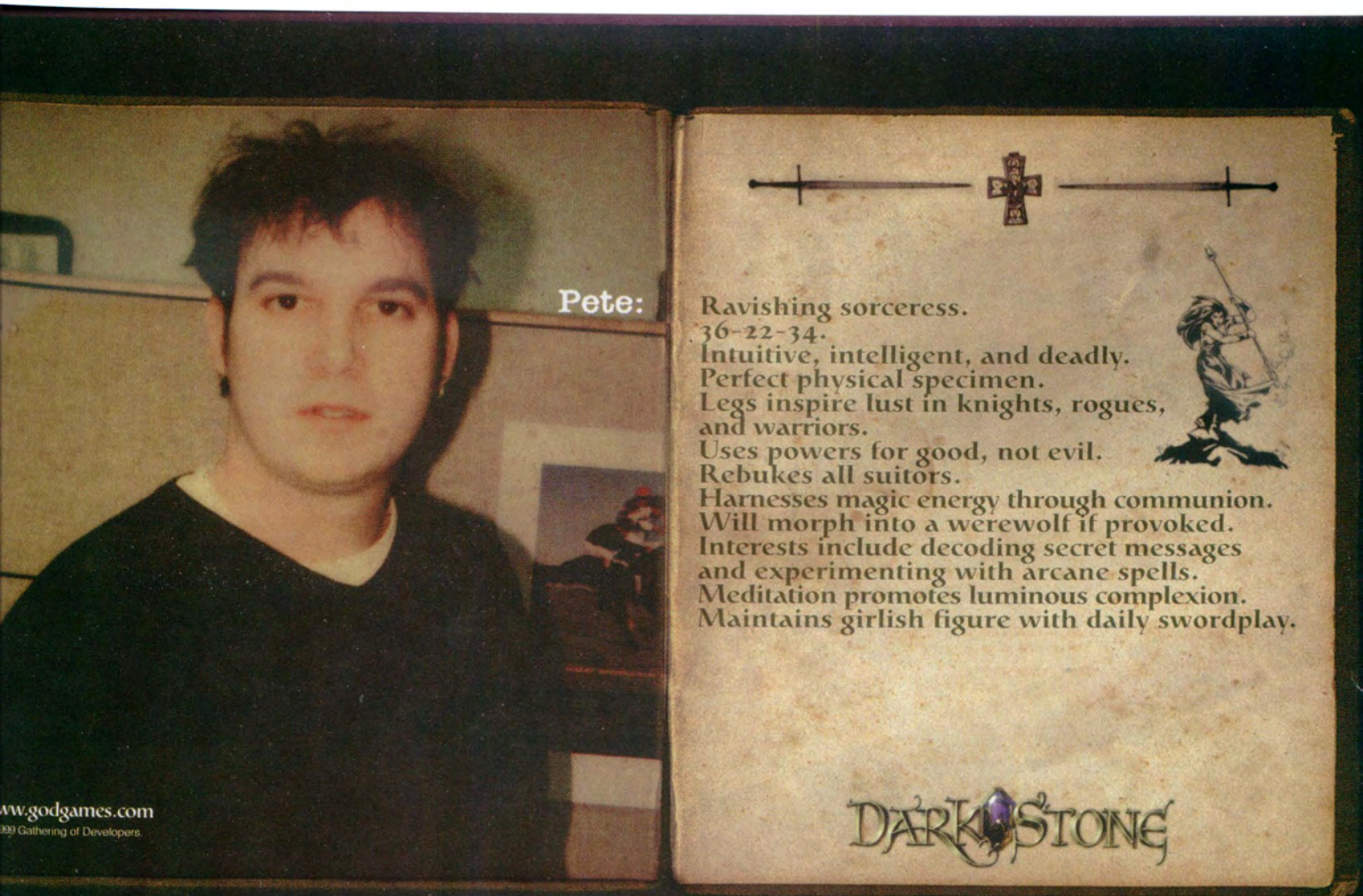
Pete:
Ravishing sorceress.
36-22-34.
Intuitive, intelligent, and deadly.
Perfect physical specimen.
Legs inspire lust in knights, rogues, and warriors.
Uses powers for good, not evil.
Rebukes all suitors.
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By Ray Winninger

Five installments so far, and we've yet to draw a single map. If you've followed this column, you know that we've already created lots of background details about our campaign world. In this installment and the next, we finally begin taking some of these concepts and turning them into a playable setting. Our first mission is to map the players' base of operations. (See *Dragon® Magazine* issue #257 for details on selecting an appropriate base of operations.)

Although many DMs begin mapping their gameworlds on a larger scale and slowly work their way down to more detailed local maps, it's much easier and more efficient to go in the opposite direction. Remember the First Rule of Dungeoncraft: Create only those details that are immediately useful. It's unlikely that you'll need large-scale maps of your campaign environment for quite some time. The players' local base of operations, on the other hand, is likely to serve as the setting for the bulk of play throughout your first several game sessions. Although the players are unlikely to embark upon adventures within their home base, the details you lavish upon the area establish the tone of the campaign and prepare the players for the challenges they'll face later.

Don't forget that societies have alignments, just like individual characters.

Before we get started, let's briefly recap the role the players' home base will play in the campaign. Once play begins, we're going to subject the heroes to all sorts of trials and tribulations, pushing them to their limits whenever we can since a fast, perilous pace makes for fun gameplay. Occasionally, though, the players need to escape to some safe haven to divvy up treasure and plot strategy. From time to time, they'll need to purchase new equipment, heal their wounds, experiment with new magical items, and perform all sorts of other mundane but useful tasks. Over time, these tasks provide a welcome change of pace from the rigors of the wild and woolly campaign. That's where the home base comes into play. An effective base serves as a safe, civilized haven for the players and houses the infrastructure they need to carry out their various administrative errands.

Effective bases have the following features:

A Local Authority

Remember that the base is supposed to give the players a sense of security. Usually, this means that the base is home to some sort of constabulary or military formation, and this in turn implies that the base is under the command of a local authority. The presence of these forces assures the PCs that their enemies can't easily pursue them and kill them as they sleep. Note that the forces present need not be formidable—a simple detachment of thirty to forty soldiers (0 level) is sufficient. The authority who oversees these forces is typically a minor noble or civil servant. For the purpose of drawing maps, the authority and his troops call for the presence of the appropriate quarters and barracks, which should be on high ground or otherwise defensively placed.

Don't forget that societies have alignments, just like individual characters. (See the *Dungeon Master® Guide*.) To foster the players' sense of security, it's probably best if the society inhabiting the base of operations is Lawfully aligned. One of the key functions of the local authority is to enforce and maintain this order. As you create the local authority, think about whether the local code of conduct includes any unusual laws or provisions. You should also plan on incorporating some sort of stockade or jail into your base map. After all, it's difficult to enforce laws if there is nowhere to house lawbreakers.

In the campaign developing in these pages, the players' base of operations is a forest stronghold known as Ironoak. The local authority is a minor noble named Richard who holds the title Warden of the Black Wood. Ironoak was built along the edge of a vast forest wilderness (the Black Wood) to protect

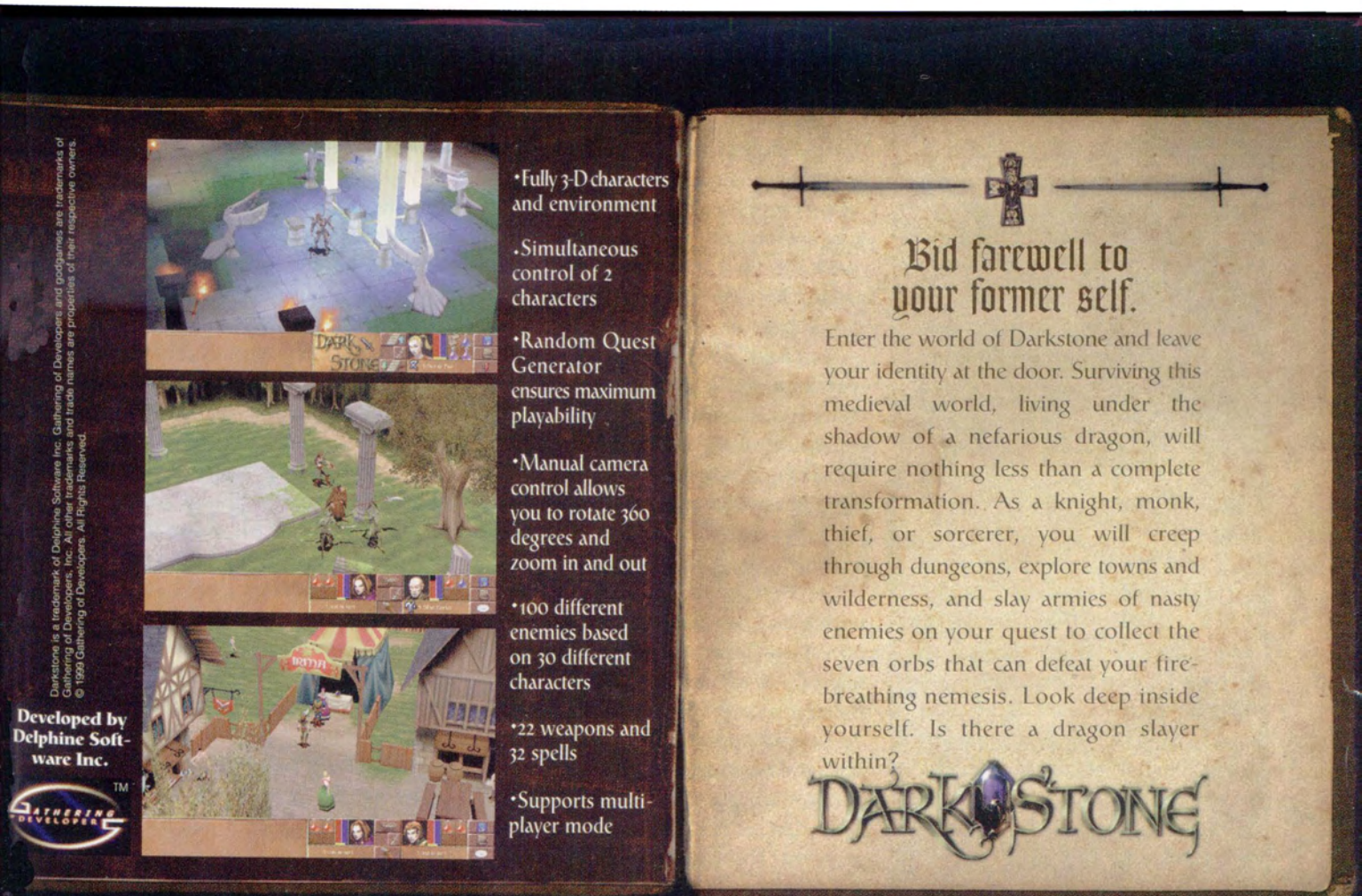
the civilized kingdom of Umbria against incursion. Because this mission is so critical, Richard has complete and unquestioned authority within Ironoak and its environs; his role is essentially that of an old west sheriff in a frontier town. Fortunately, Richard and the society he represents are both Lawful Good. Richard has thirty-five men-at-arms and sixteen archers at his disposal. Because Ironoak is a forest stronghold, I've decided upon an interesting provision in the code of conduct that he upholds. Fearful of devastating forest fires, during the summer dry season Richard has ruled that leaving an open flame unattended in or around Ironoak is a serious offense that deserves brief imprisonment in the stronghold's stockade. This also gives me the idea to plan on incorporating some sort of central fire alarm (such as a bell or gong) into the Ironoak map.

Townsfolk

In addition to the soldiers, it's a good idea to have a handful of common townsfolk around. Don't worry about giving them all names and statistics; that won't be necessary. In this case, inventing too many details can actually prove harmful. The main reason to establish the players' base of operations in a populated area is to provide a handy mechanism you can later use to insert useful NPCs into the game. When you get around to creating adventures and dealing with the whims of your players, you'll find it's often necessary to introduce new nonplayer characters into the campaign. Suppose, for instance, that you come up with a concept for an adventure that revolves around an aging ex-soldier who hires the players to accompany him on a mysterious mission to meet an old battlefield enemy. Now you need a nearby aging soldier. Similarly, what if the players decide to seek out an expert on ancient lore to help them translate some elder runes? Now you need a nearby sage. A vaguely defined population in the vicinity of your base of operations allows you to introduce new nonplayer characters as they are needed; they've always lived "on the other side of town" and just haven't yet encountered the players.

A vaguely defined population in the vicinity of your base of operations allows you to introduce new nonplayer characters as they are needed ...

When it comes to drawing maps, all these townspeople require houses and hovels in which to live. One important note to keep in mind is that the residents of genuine medieval villages tended to crowd many more people into a single dwelling than we do today, with ten or twelve largish buildings usually providing more than enough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DARKSTONE

Dear Dungeoncraft

One of the people in my gaming group plays a Chaotic Neutral Thief. She wants to use her Pick Pockets ability to secretly steal items from the other player characters. Is this legal? How would we make it work? After all, if she suddenly announces, "I use Pick Pockets to secretly rob Gurak blind!" she's going to get a sword between her ribs whether the attempt succeeds or not. She's talked about passing me a note whenever she feels like helping herself to someone else's treasure, but I don't think that will work either. Everyone knows she's a Chaotic Neutral Thief, and the minute she and I start passing notes around and dropping dice, the other players are bound to figure out exactly what's happening. What should we do?

—Addled in Illinois

First off, yes it's certainly legal for one player character to steal from the others. It's usually not a good idea, since cooperation is almost always the key to successful adventuring in the AD&D® game, and anything that threatens the spirit of that cooperation is bound to cause your players all sorts of problems. But if your Thief insists on dipping into her comrades' purses, then who are you to stop her?

The way to make this work is to prearrange some sort of signal with the Thief player. For instance, every time she shakes a pair of dice next to her ear and sets them on the table next to one of the other players, she's signaling her intent to pick that player's pocket. If the Pick Pockets attempt fails, don't forget to roll the victim's chance to detect the attempt.

Incidentally, how do all the other players know that Thief is Chaotic Neutral? In general, it's not a good idea for the players to announce their alignments to each other. This makes it far too difficult to deal with the occasional player who wants the challenge of secretly playing an evil character within a party of good adventurers and vice versa. Get in the habit of asking your players to keep their alignments secret now so you can easily deal with such a situation if it should arise later.

shelter for anywhere from fifty to one hundred residents. Of course, nothing requires you to design your fantasy villages according to this principle, though it's certainly something to consider. As you're preparing your base map, also think about what the townsfolk do for a living; perhaps this industry requires other structures and dwellings. A town full of shopkeepers, for instance, means that there are plenty of shops around, as well as the infrastructure necessary to allow for the easy importation of goods (i.e., facilities to quarter merchant caravans, warehouses, etc).

I envision Ironoak housing between seventy-five and one hundred townsfolk. Most of them live in multiple-family treehouses, so I'm assuming that there are between twenty and thirty total dwellings. Most of Ironoak's residents earn their keep in the surrounding forest as trappers and hunters, though several operate market stalls catering to the steady stream of merchants and adventurers who pass through the frontier stronghold. All of this suggests to me that the Ironoak map should feature an unusual number of inns (say, three) for an outpost of its size to cater to the adventurers and merchants.

Shops

Because the PCs will eventually need to upgrade their equipment and purchase various supplies, your base of operations should feature all the shops and merchants necessary to meet their needs. This does not mean that you should offer all of the items listed in the *Player's Handbook* for sale in the immediate area. You want to leave some items, particularly some of the more expensive pieces, unavailable for the time being. Later, when the PCs can afford these items, the fact that they must seek them elsewhere can serve as a useful springboard for an adventure or two. Suppose, for example, that horses are unavailable in the base of operations. When the players are ready to purchase mounts, they must travel to the nearest larger town or city, giving you a great opportunity to make their voyage a bit dangerous and exciting. For now, simply make a list of those items that are definitely not available in or around the base. You should also think about how many total shops are present and which shops sell which goods. Since it's generally easier to deal with a fewer number of buildings, try thinking in terms of larger general shops that sell many different categories of goods rather than smaller specialty shops that sell only one or two items. Alternatively, you can go with one or two large marketplaces that house many small, specialized vendors.

The following items are normally not available in Ironoak: any sort of expensive clothing, any kind of animals (including horses), any sort of transport, spyglasses, water clocks, arquebuses, composite bows, hand crossbows, lances, khopeshes, scimitars, and any armor better than chainmail. I'm going to presume that most of the other items listed in the *Player's Handbook* are available somewhere in the stronghold, though I won't rule out the possibility of excluding other items on a case-by-case basis later. Although a small smithy is the only real shop in Ironoak, the stronghold is home to a large market that features several dozen specialized stalls and tables. The regular vendors who operate in this market are sometimes temporarily joined by merchants passing through the stronghold, some of whom occasionally offer the items not normally available for sale.

Temple

You should definitely think about incorporating a temple or two into your base of operations. Not only does it give Clerics and Specialty Priests a place to pray, it also gives your adventurers somewhere they can turn to receive the higher order healing spells and cures early in the campaign before the PC Priests are capable of casting such spells themselves. Of course, the NPC Clerics who run the temple will expect a donation in exchange for their services. (See Chapter 12 of the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*.) A good rule of thumb is to place the temple in your base of operations under the aegis of a 7th-level NPC Priest. This gives the players indirect access to all Priest spells up to the 4th level, including: *cure light wounds*, *detect poison*, *cure blindness*, *cure disease*, *remove curse*, *cure serious wounds*, and *neutralize poison*. Making these services available

to the players will give you much greater freedom when it comes time to select monsters and adversaries to place in your adventures.

If you read the column on AD&D game world religions (see *Dragon Magazine* #258), you should already know something about the nature of religion and temples in your fantasy world. You may want to review those notes now to give you a better idea of how one of your temples might appear on a map. Are all your temples located in forested groves? If so, such a grove must exist in or around your base of operations. Are your temples surrounded by large colonnades? If so, you should plan on allocating more map space.

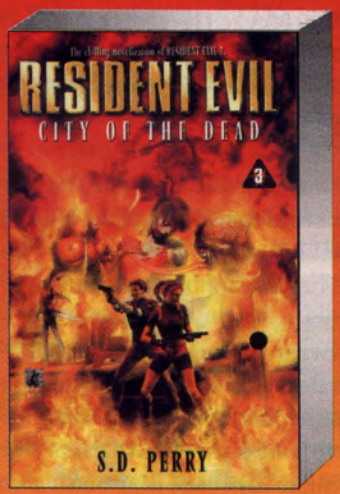
Ironoak boasts a small temple dedicated to the sect known as the "Children of Aris." The temple occupies yet another treehouse, and it boasts, among other things, a large library of ancient writings and scrolls. This library will make an excellent source of arcane information for the player adventurers, and the master of the temple also acts as a sage with fields of study in history, folklore, and religion. (See Chapter 12 of the *Dungeon Master Guide*; I'll consider his temple library "Partial" for the purposes of Table 62.) Of course, the temple master expects compensation for his services, just like any other sage.

Fantasy Element

This is no more than a matter of personal taste, but I like to place something "fantastic" in all the towns and villages I create for my AD&D games. This element immediately signals to the players that they are not in the real world and gives them an idea of what they can expect. Flip through the *Monstrous Manual*™ book. Perhaps one or more of its denizens are active in your base or village—maybe the local innkeeper keeps a mischievous leprechaun trapped in a cage behind the bar, or perhaps a centaur serves as a special scout and advisor to the local authority. Similarly, you might think about whether any demihumans are active in the base and what sort of role they play in the local society. Other good sources of ideas for workable fantastic elements include the various spell and magical item descriptions, children's books, and even modern buildings and cities. As an example of the latter, since Ironoak is suspended in the treetops, I think a large, ornately carved wooden elevator that moves people and items from the ground up to the trees sounds like a lot of fun. The elevator operates via a complex series of winches and pulleys; it's cranked between treetop and ground level by a contingent of Richard's troops who act as watchmen.

That should be enough to get you started. Next month, we'll take a look at a couple of additional characteristics of effective home bases and explore strategies for actually drawing the map!

Ray Winninger has so far written six of these columns in four different cities. (This installment comes to you via San Francisco.) He's designed more games than he'd care to remember for more publishers than he can easily recall.



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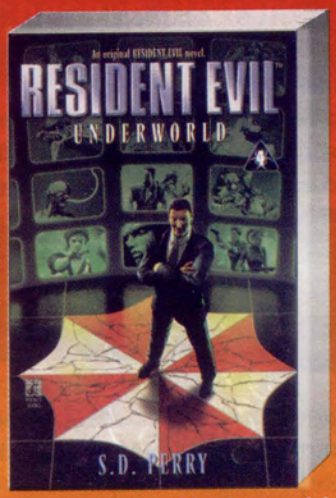

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Sage Advice

By Skip Williams

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The Sage cannot make personal replies; please include no SASE with your questions.

This month, the Sage pauses to explain some recent advice, then goes on to consider character abilities in the AD&D® game. The Sage also takes a look at dwarven rune magic from the Forgotten Realms® setting.

Back in issue #256, you said that the *fire shield* spell inflicted either fire or cold damage, depending on which version of the spell was in use. Way back in issue #146, however, you said that a fire shield spell inflicted neither fire nor cold damage. Which is correct? If the newer answer is correct, how did you come to change your mind?

The newer answer is the correct one. To be honest, I'd forgotten about the older answer when writing the answer that appeared in issue #256; if I had remembered, I would have included a note pointing out the update.

The older answer reflects what the staff at TSR, Inc. thought about the *fire shield* spell at the time. The thinking went something like this: The *fire shield* spell produces a magical field that protects the user against fire or cold. The field also duplicates any physical damage the user suffers and directs that damage back at whatever creature caused it. There is no stopping the redirected damage.

The *Player's Handbook* says a Thief can find and remove traps of a magical nature at half the normal rating. The *fire trap* and *glyph of warding* spells are addressed, but no definition is ever given as to what constitutes a magical trap. Are the spells *symbol, lesser sign of sealing,* and *greater sign of sealing* traps? Can a 7th-level Thief really disarm a 9th-level spell? Could you provide some clarification concerning what kinds of magical traps a Thief can disarm?

Looking at the spell's description in 1999, after ten years and a new edition of the rules, I find nothing to support the old way of thinking about the spell.

See the 2nd-level Priest spell *find traps* for a definition of the term "trap." A magical trap relies on magic rather than on any physical means to do its dirt.

I suggest that you allow Thieves to use their Find/Remove Traps skills to locate and remove any magical effect that qualifies as a trap, including all the sample spells you've listed. The Thief should roll at half his normal chance to locate the trap. If the "find" roll succeeds, the Thief can tinker with the magical trap without harm but must make a second roll to actually remove it. The second roll is made just like a *dispel magic* spell—11 or better on 1d20 for success, subtract one from the roll for each level the Thief is below the level of the creator of the trap. If the Thief is higher level, add one to the roll for each level of difference.

If you prefer something simpler, ignore the text in the *Player's Handbook*, use the Thief's full Find/Remove Traps score, and subtract 5% from the thief's chance of success (for both finding and removing) for each level of the spell used to create the trap. For example, a Wizard's *symbol* spell imposes a –45% penalty.

Can Thieves use shields?

I think this is an old question, but I couldn't find the answer. Can Thieves use shields?

No, Thieves cannot use shields.

I have two questions regarding the Thief's Backstab ability. First, do characters using two weapons gain the Backstab bonus on both attacks since, according to the rules, they occur at the same time? Second, when using the Backstab against an opponent like a beholder, I understand that the damage multiplier does not apply, but does the Thief still gain the +4 attack bonus?

When a Thief receives multiple attacks for any reason, only the first attack receives Backstab bonuses (+4 attack bonus and a damage multiplier). Under the core AD&D rules, a Thief using two weapons decides which one will be first.

A beholder cannot be backstabbed at all (no attack bonus, no damage multiplier). In fact, a beholder with functioning eyestalks has no "rear," and foes cannot even gain the standard +2 bonus for rear attacks.

When a Mage is casting a *fireball* or *lightning bolt* spell, must the target be visible, or can the Mage cast them in complete darkness?

According to Chapter 7 in the *Player's Handbook*, the caster must be able to see the target point to cast any spell with a range other than "touch." If the caster is unable to see the target point for any reason, he cannot cast the spell. If the spell has "touch" range, the caster can use the spell against anything he can touch, whether he can see it or not. Although the rules don't specifically say so, it stands to reason that a caster can always use a spell with a range of "0" even if he can't see or touch anything. It also stands to reason that a character can cast any spell with a range of greater than "0" against anything he can touch whether he can see it or not.

Can dwarves claim their –4 AC bonus against any creatures of sufficient size, or only against the creatures listed in the *Player's Handbook*? The bonus is a function of size, right? So it should apply to all really big creatures.

The bonus is a matter of intense training, not size. The *Player's Handbook* assumes that all dwarves are trained to fight against the creatures on the list. Individual DMs can change the list if they feel the need. A creature should not be added to the list unless it is bipedal and size L or larger.

How exactly does a deep gnome's defense bonus work? The *Complete Book of Gnomes and Halflings* seems to imply that deep gnome Warriors have a natural Armor Class of 2, that improves with level. Do deep gnome Priests have a natural Armor Class of 2 as well? Do deep gnome Priests still have an Armor Class bonus that improves with level?

Page 25 says a typical svirfneblin Warrior has an Armor Class of 2, but that's thanks to the armor they wear (something that the book should have pointed out). An unarmored svirfneblin has an Armor Class of 10, but its racial defense bonus applies. (See below.)

Any svirfneblin gains an Armor Class bonus of +1 for each level beyond 3rd. The racial bonus can never make a svirfneblin's Armor Class better than –6.

This might seem like a dumb question, but as a relatively new DM, I need some sort of guideline. Who rolls the dice when it comes to obtaining the results for various encounters—the DM or the players? Or does it really matter as long as each trusts the other not to fudge the roll (although I realize the DM may do so at his discretion)?

Really dumb questions have to vie for spots in the April columns—and even then funny wins out over dumb.

It really doesn't matter who rolls the dice. Most players prefer to roll their own dice, and the DMs should let them except in cases where the result won't be readily apparent to the PC. For example, it's probably best for the DM to make rolls to find secret doors. As a practical matter, the DM should make all the rolls for monsters and villains.

I cannot find a reasonable answer to this question: A 10th-level Mage has a 60% chance to cast a 9th-level spell from a scroll. An 11th-level Thief has a 75% to cast the same spell. Should a Thief have a better chance of success than a Mage of comparable experience? When you have a combination Mage/Thief, how do you compute the chance for a scroll spell to fail? Does the fact that the character is also a Thief give a bonus to the attempt?

Thieves indeed often prove better at reading unknown spells from scrolls than Wizards, especially when dealing with high-level spells. When training fails, the talented amateur often has the advantage over the pro.

For Wizard/Thieves, calculate both failure chances and use the lowest failure chance. Note that a Thief always has a 25% chance for a harmful failure, whereas it is possible for a Wizard to simply fail outright with no catastrophic effects. You might want to let the player choose to have the character attempt to use a scroll as a Wizard or as a Thief.

If a Sha'ir sees a Mage cast a true dweomer, can the Sha'ir send his or her gen after it?

No, but a Sha'ir could work on and cast a true dweomer just like any other Wizard.

My players have recently annoyed me, claiming that it was illogical for their characters not to rise in attack skill (THAC0) with simple training: parrying against mobile dummies and fighting against each other with bandaged swords, etc. I understand that it would disrupt the game mechanics if characters could become better fighters simply by training in the comfort of a town, but I really need a minimally logical explanation to prevent my players from pouting.

f a Sha'ir sees a Mage cast a true dweomer, can the Sha'ir send his or her gen after it?

You might want to start by pointing out that the characters in question might have once trained against dummies, but that's probably how they became adventurers in the first place. Nothing beats real combat for sharpening fighting skills, especially once a character has achieved a basic level of combat proficiency.

You might want to consider introducing the weapon expertise rules from the *Combat & Tactics* book, which could account for extra training. Note that PCs must have weapon proficiency slots available to gain the benefit. If your players balk, you might explain to them that proficiency slots reflect a character's general rate of development and opportunity to learn something new. If the character has no slots available, the character is not in a position to learn anything new.

I'm trying to use the martial arts rules in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. In how many styles can a character specialize? How do I handle continuing weapon specialization in martial arts? How quickly can a character gain attack and damage bonuses? Can a character save up unused slots and apply them at each level gained?

You seem to be referring not to weapon specialization but to martial arts style specialization as described on pages 77–78 of *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*.

A 1st-level character can specialize in one (and only one) form of martial arts. If the character devotes an extra weapon proficiency slot to the style (two slots in all), the character gains all the bonuses and abilities associated with the style plus the specialization benefits noted on page 77 (under the Specializing in Martial Arts heading). After 1st level, the character can devote additional weapon proficiency slots to the style and gain the additional benefits noted on page 78 (under the Continuing Specialization heading). Even if you allow characters to save unspent proficiency slots, they can improve their martial arts skill only as they gain new weapon proficiency slots. A Fighter, for example, can have two slots devoted to martial arts at 1st level and cannot add a third slot until 4th level, when the Fighter gains a new weapon proficiency slot.

Our DM has ruled that characters lose half their melee attacks when moving half their movement rate. That can't be right. Why can't my 7th-level dwarf kill an opponent with his first attack and move up to another opponent (in the adjacent square) and use his second attack? Is the DM confusing another rule that concerns missile fire rates and movement? I always thought that a character can have full melee attacks if moving less than half the normal movement rate and has half the usual attacks if moving more than half the full movement rate. Who's correct?

Your DM is correct, of course.

Your DM probably is looking at the Movement in Melee section in Chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*, which indicates that a character can move at half rate and still make a melee attack. The text implies that only one melee attack is possible while on the move. Most DMs I know, however, allow a character a full allotment of attacks during a half move, but the letter of the rules is on your DM's side.

Could a person with the Epicure proficiency tell if food were poisoned?

The *Monstrous Compendium*® tome (and various appendices) seem ambiguous about whether a damage bonus from Strength is added to all of a creature's attacks or just to weapon attacks. After extensive reading in the various manuals, I've not been able to resolve this either way. In some cases (as with the equinal), the Strength bonus has already been added in the entry, but in other cases (like the pit fiend), the entry is less clear. Also, in some cases, the text seems to imply that the Strength bonus should be added to all attacks (for example, the pit fiend).

In general, a Strength bonus is added to weapon attacks only. Exceptions abound, so follow these two guidelines:

◆ If the creature has a Strength score listed and the Damage / Attack line at the top of the monster entry does not include a Strength adjustment, apply the Strength damage adjustment only to attacks made with weapons, no matter what the text in the monster description might imply.

◆ If the damage line at the top of the monster entry includes bonus damage, always apply the bonus, even if the text of the entry indicates that it is a Strength bonus.

Could a person with the Epicure proficiency (described in *Dragon Magazine* issue #254) tell if food were poisoned?

I suppose so, since the character can determine what ingredients were used to prepare a dish. Of course, once the character has tasted enough to detect the poison, the character has also probably been poisoned. If the character very carefully tastes poisoned food and is equally careful not the swallow any, it might be reasonable to allow a proficiency check to note the poison; many poisons have very little taste and should impose a penalty to the check. Sticking an ingested poison in one's mouth is dangerous, so require the character to make a saving throw vs. poison, but at a bonus, say +4. If the character tastes a contact poison, no saving throw bonus applies.

Dwarven Rune Magic

The recent *Demihuman Deities* book contains references to something called dwarven rune magic. What is rune magic? Where can I find rules for it?

Dwarven rune magic was first presented in *Dwarves Deep*, which is now out of print. The references to rune magic in *Demihuman Deities* were intended to keep the entries of dwarven deities consistent with what was presented in *Dwarves Deep*.

The rune magic in *Dwarves Deep* consisted of exactly two spells, which the Sage presents here in slightly revised and updated form:

Rune of Power

(Abjuration, Evocation)
Level: 5
Sphere: Guardian, Wards
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Until discharged
Casting Time: 1 round per square foot
Area of Effect: See text
Saving Throw: See text

This special type of magical inscription was once the heart of all dwarven magic, usable by all dwarves with differing degrees of power and reliability. Modern dwarves do not have this power. Certain dwarven Priests (see *Demihuman Deities*) can cast these runes as spells.

A *rune of power* is similar to a *glyph of warding* spell. A rune can be drawn to any size larger than the caster's hand and can be extended to encompass any size area provided the rune remains on a single, contiguous surface. Successful *dispel magic* or *erase* spells will remove *runes of power*. Thieves can locate and disable *runes of power* as magical traps.

Any being touching the *rune*, touching or opening the surface upon which the *rune* is inscribed, or passing though an opening bounded by the *rune* on four sides suffers its harmful effects. *Runes* cannot function offensively; for example, a *rune* placed on a sword is not triggered if the sword is used to strike an enemy. If, however, someone picks up a sword protected by a *rune*, the *rune* is triggered.

The Priest casting the *rune* can specify a password or set of conditions that keep the *rune* from discharging.

A *rune of power* can be set to avoid discharging when creatures of certain races, alignments, faiths, and sizes try to pass it. It cannot be set to avoid specific levels, hit dice, or classes of creatures.

A *rune of power* cannot be placed in the same area with another *rune*, a *glyph of warding*, or a *symbol*. The second warding spell placed in such an area fails.

The most widely known *runes of power* are:

Alhalbrin: This *rune* melts metal. Once triggered, it glows for 3 rounds. All metal within 30 feet of the glowing *rune* becomes hot, inflicting 1d4 points of damage each round upon any creature wearing or touching it. Each metal item must make a successful saving throw vs. magical fire at a –3 penalty each round it is affected or melt. Melting metal inflicts 4d6 points of damage on any creature touching or wearing it.

Faerindyl: This *rune* causes a 10'-diameter sphere of flame to shoot from the protected surface and roll over the creature who triggered it. The sphere travels in a straight line at a movement rate of 18 for 1 turn. If the sphere collides with an object larger than it is, it bursts, filling a 20'-radius area with flame. (It always bursts when its duration expires.) The sphere simply rolls over smaller objects. If an object is too large to roll over and too small to burst the sphere, the sphere rolls around it (50% chance to go left or right). The sphere must roll along a surface. If it rolls over an opening in the floor, it falls and bursts if the drop is more than 10 feet. It can roll up or down stairs or ramps.

Objects the sphere touches must make a saving throw vs. magical fire; creatures the sphere touches suffer 3d6 points of fire damage (no saving throw). When the sphere bursts, all creatures within the 20'-radius area suffer 3d6 points of fire damage (save vs. spell for half).

Sabras: This *rune* creates an effect similar to a *blade barrier* 10 feet thick and as long and wide as the surface the *rune* protects (or the opening the *rune* surrounds). The barrier lasts one round but inflicts 4d6 points of damage to creatures within the area (save vs. spell for half). A Priest must be at least 13th level to cast this *rune*.

Thundaril: This *rune* acts as a *polymorph other* spell on all creatures within a 20'-radius area (save vs. spell to negate). The caster must choose a tiny, innocuous form for affected creatures to assume. Snails, slugs, and toads seem to be the favorites. A Priest must be at least 9th level to cast this *rune*.

Velurndyn: This *rune* acts as a *reverse gravity* spell. When triggered, it flings all beings within 20 feet upward as high as 30 feet, before releasing them to fall to the ground. Creatures unable to fly suffer normal falling damage. Some old dwarven fortresses feature spiked ceilings that make this *rune* even more deadly. A Priest must be at least 15th level to cast this *rune*.

Some *runes of power* can be scribed in the air or on a surface the caster can touch. These have a casting time of 1 round and take immediate effect when completed.

The most widely known of these *runes* are:

Bhelaerak: Acts as the 8th-level Wizard spell *glassteel*, affecting ten pounds of material per level of the Priest.

Corsimmyr: Acts as the 5th-level Wizard spell *passwall*. A Priest must be at least 11th level to cast this *rune*.

Delhaubrin: Acts as the 2nd-level Wizard spell *shatter*.

Elemsyr: Acts as the 2nd-level Wizard spell *invisibility*, affecting a single creature of any size or object up to human size.

The material component to create any *rune of power* is the Priest's holy symbol, which is used to trace the *rune*.

Rune Chant

(Abjuration, Evocation)
Level: 7
Sphere: Guardian
Range: 10 yards/level
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 2 rounds
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

This spell causes a *rune of power* (see above) to form anywhere in range, even in midair. The *rune* takes effect immediately. A *rune* that does not have a specific area of effect fills a 20'-radius area when cast via this spell.

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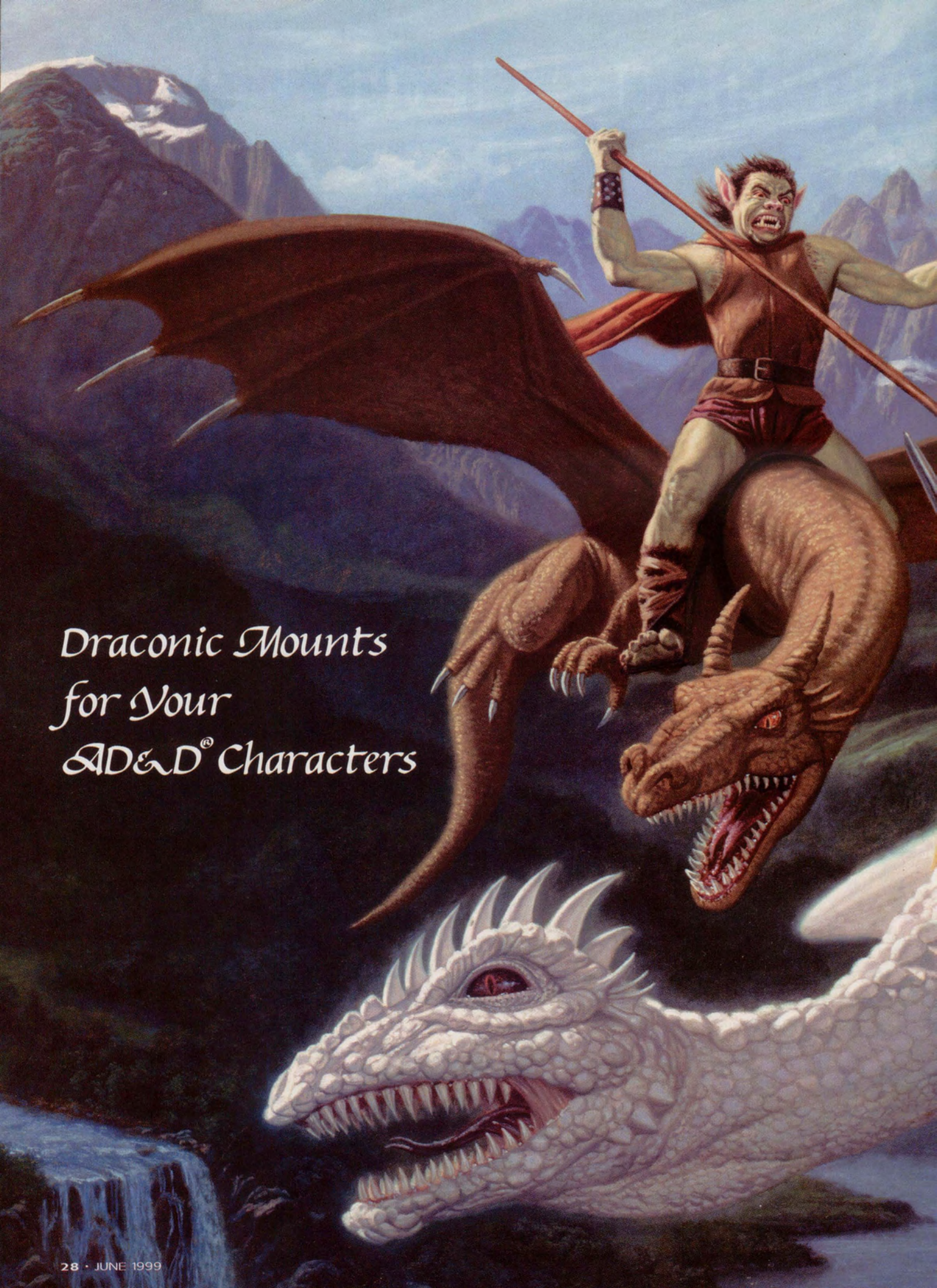

Draconic Mounts for Your AD&D® Characters

Greater Drakes

by Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by Eric Peterson

Greater drakes are larger kin to the drakes featured in David E. Cates' "Dragons are Wizards' Best Friends" in DRAGON® Magazine #146. While they share the dragon's general build (so much so that they are often mistaken for true dragons), they are not adept at magic, do not inspire magical fear or hoard vast amounts of treasure, and grow only to about the size of a large horse. They also share the horse's general level of intelligence and can be taught to serve as aerial steeds. Greater drakes are Neutral in alignment, but once domesticated and trained tend to mirror the alignments of their masters. They have a lifespan of about fifty years.

Greater drakes make excellent aerial mounts. They provide many of the benefits of a draconic steed without the accompanying disadvantages. For example, a dragon's enormous size makes keeping one adequately fed and housed both difficult and expensive, a huge dragon cannot land atop a castle keep without causing massive destruction, and one cannot fly a dragon to the middle of the city to pick up a few supplies without causing widespread panic. In addition, dragons tend to take a dim view of their kin being used as beasts of burden by mere humans and demihumans; riding a greater drake is less likely to arouse the wrath of an ancient wyrm!

There are six known subspecies of greater drake, although there might well be more. Knowledge of the greater drake is only now reaching humanity for several reasons. First of all, these creatures inhabit secluded wilderness areas, far from the cities. Perhaps more importantly, they are often mistaken for young dragons.

Just because humanity is only now learning of greater drakes doesn't mean that the creatures are unknown to other intelligent races. Elves, orcs, and lizard men are well acquainted with several of the greater drake subspecies that share similar environments. Many humans first encounter a greater drake serving as a riding mount for a member of one of these races.

Regardless of subspecies, all greater drakes have several things in common. They are reptilian, hatching from eggs and molting several times during their lives as their bodies outgrow their current set of scales. They have the standard "dragon" physiognomy: a long head on a supple neck, four short lizardlike legs ending in powerful claws, a serpentine tail, and a set of batlike wings providing flight. Also like dragons, most (but not all) greater drake subspecies have developed a breath weapon.

The greater drakes' various breath weapons all derive from a bladder-like organ in their throats. The drake's throat bladder can expand like a bullfrog's throat or a pelican's beak; while not all greater drakes have developed breath weapons, the throat bladder is present in all known subspecies.

	Vandalraug	Ravainus
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land	Mountains or hills
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary or mated pair
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any (usually night)
DIET:	Carnivore	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2–4)	Semi- (2–4)
TREASURE:	Nil	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1–2
ARMOR CLASS:	4	4
MOVEMENT:	12, fly 18 (C)	9, fly 18 (C)
HIT DICE:	7+2	6+1
THAC0:	13	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–12/1–10/1–10	1–10/1–8/1–8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Wing slash	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to magical fear	Etherealness
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	L	L
MORALE:	Steady (11–12); Elite (13–14)	Average (8–10)
XP VALUE:	2,000	975

Vandalraug

The vandalraug, or battle drake, is the "heavy war horse" of the greater drakes, easily domesticated into service as a flying battle mount and able to carry a heavily armored warrior without sacrificing maneuverability or speed. It is the largest of the greater drakes and one of the most common. The vandalraug is often domesticated by orcs.

Scale coloration covers a broader range than in most greater drake species. The most common scale colors are green (ranging from olive to a dark forest green), brown (from a tan to a dark coffee color), dark gray or black, and the occasional reddish-orange. Each specimen has scales of a single color, with wings of a slightly lighter shade. Since their scales are often the color of chromatic dragons, vandalraugs are easily mistaken for dragon hatchlings. Regardless of scale coloration, all vandalraugs have orange eyes with black, slitted pupils in the manner of many reptiles.

Vandalraugs sport a pair of backward-curving horns, similar to those of a wyvern. While the horns are not used in combat, the males often butt heads like rams in the springtime as part of their elaborate mating rituals. The "clack" from two sets of the hollow horns clashing travels quite a distance. Vandalraugs also inflate their throat bladders prior to releasing their mating calls, which can be heard for miles. Both sexes exhibit this behavior, though the females' call is somewhat higher in pitch than those of the males.

In the wild, Vandalraugs fight with teeth and claws, inflicting 1–12 points of damage with the former and 1–10 points of damage with the latter. If on the ground, the vandalraug can also slash an opponent with the sharp, swordlike spines extending from the tips of each "finger" of its batlike wings. The creature can target only a single opponent with each wing, inflicting 1–8 points of damage on a successful hit. The wing-slash victim must be on one side of the vandalraug; the drake cannot use its wings to attack creatures directly in front of it, nor can it employ its wing-blades as weapons while in flight.

If trained as a fighting steed, the vandalraug's combat abilities are enhanced by those of its rider. Many vandalraug riders of the Warrior class employ lances or crossbows. Even Wizards are fond of riding vandalraugs into combat, for the creatures can glide between wing-strokes, allowing Wizards to cast spells while mounted with little chance

Arsalon	Retchenbeast	Silislithis	Tumarandi
Temperate woodlands	Swamplands	Oceans, coastal shorelines	Any temperate land
Very rare	Very Rare	Rare	Very rare
Solitary	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Any (usually day)	Any	Any	Any
Omnivore	Carnivore	Carnivore	Omnivore
Semi- (2–4)	Semi- (2–4)	Semi- (2–4)	Semi- (2–4)
Incidental	Nil	Nil	Q
Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
1	1–3	1	1
4	6	5	6
9, fly 18 (C)	6, swim 6, fly 9 (D)	9, fly 18 (C), swim 15	9, fly 18 (C)
5+4	4+2	6+2	5+2
15	17	15	15
3	3	3	3
1–10/1–6/1–6 or 1–12/1–6/1–6	2–9/1–4/1–4	1–10/1–8/1–8	1–10/2–7/2–7
Breath weapon, poison	Breath weapon, surprise	Breath weapon	Breath weapon
Nil	Resistant to acid	Resistance to cold	Resistant to fire
Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
L	M–L	L	L
Steady (11–12)	Unsteady (5–7)	Average (8–10)	Steady (11–12)
2,000	650	1,400	975

of spell disruption or misfire due to the jostling caused by most riding mounts (aerial or otherwise).

Ironically, the greater drake most prized as a combat steed is one of the few that lacks a breath weapon, but most riders agree that the creature's ferocity more than makes up for the lack of a ranged combat attack. Some sages point out the similarities between the vandalraug and the fang dragon (both lack a breath weapon and can slice at opponents with wing-blades), although a direct lineage is as yet unproven.

Vandalraugs are immune to all forms of magical fear, although they are intelligent enough to realize when it's best to flee from battle.

Like the majority of greater drakes, vandalraugs are generally solitary creatures, coming together only in the springtime to mate. The female initiates the mating call, which is answered in turn by any males in the area. The males fight ritualistic combats (involving the head-butting mentioned above) to win the right to breed. These combats are rarely to the death; the loser flies off in search of another female.

The mated pair stays together until their clutch of 2–5 eggs hatch; after that, the male flies off, leaving the young in the care of the female. She teaches the hatchlings hunting and flying for the first year of their lives; after that, they fly off on their own. Females breed only once every three or four years.

Vandalraugs are desirable mounts, for they are easily trained for combat. While usually aggressive in the wild only when aroused (when hunting or when a potential threat approaches), a vandalraug's lust for combat can be greatly enhanced through training, until it is as eager for battle as a trained war dog. Furthermore, they are loyal to their masters so long as they are treated well—tales abound of vandalraugs saving their masters after they've been thrown from the saddle, often fighting against incredible odds until help arrives. Unfortunately, while several orc tribes have taken to raising vandalraugs as aerial steeds, few have learned the benefits of treating their mounts well.

Because of their value as riding mounts, vandalraug eggs can be sold for as high as 2,000 gp and hatchlings for as much as 3,500 gp.

Kavainus

The kavainus, or ghost drake, is covered with hard, bony scales ranging from bone white to snow white to a light, dusty gray. From a distance, they are easily mistaken for white dragons or ice lizards. A row of sharp horns forms a ridge along either side of the kavainus' skull, giving it a wedge-shaped head. The creature's teeth and claws are bone white, and the dark, deep-set eyes are each protected by a bony crest. Kavaini have exceptional vision and can see into the Ethereal Plane at will. Their scales absorb light during the daytime and glow faintly during the hours of darkness, giving the creature its nickname, "ghost drake." (The name "kavainus" means "spirit-dragon-kin" in the language of the gray elves, many of whom have domesticated these drakes.)

Kavaini bite for 1–10 points of damage and inflict 1–8 points of damage with each set of front claws. The kavainus' jaws are powerful—any "bite" attack roll that succeeds by more than four points automatically inflicts maximum damage and forces the victim to make a Strength check the following round to break free. If the victim fails to escape, the kavainus automatically inflicts bite damage the next round (normal, not maximum) and strikes with its claws at +2 to hit. Victims may attempt to break free (by making a successful Strength check) once each round.

Unlike most other greater drakes, the kavainus has no breath weapon. However, it can become ethereal at will. While ethereal, the kavainus remains visible and can see on both the Prime Material and Ethereal Planes, but it can be attacked only by other ethereal creatures or those employing *platemail of etherealness* or similar magic. Kavaini take a full round to become ethereal or return fully to the Prime Material Plane, and they generally use this ability only to escape more powerful foes. Anyone in contact with a kavainus can be turned ethereal along with the creature or not, at the drake's whim, as long as the "passenger" is smaller than the kavainus. This makes it difficult to capture grown specimens; most domestic kavaini are trained from infancy.

During the night, the kavainus' eerie glow often frightens away intelligent humanoids, who believe the creatures to be undead. On the other hand, the glow acts as a weakened *faerie fire* effect, allowing enemies to strike the drake at +1 to hit darkness.

Kavaini are one of the few greater drake subspecies that mate for life. They lair in mountain caves or aeries all but inaccessible except by air. Once a year, the kavaini perform an elaborate mating ritual wherein the male flies in and out of the Ethereal Plane in pursuit of the fleeing female. Afterward, a single egg is laid back in the cave and protected by the female until it hatches. During this time, the male brings slain prey back to the cave for his mate. Both parents care for the kavaini hatchling and guard it ferociously—both parents strike at +2 to hit when defending their lair.

If captured when very young, the kavainus can be trained as an aerial steed. Kavainus mounts are highly sought after by messengers, and many cities have begun establishing a messenger service employing several of these creatures and their riders. Their ability to "go ethereal" is almost a guarantee that any message will make it to its intended destination. Similarly, the gray elves use their kavainus mounts to patrol the wilderness areas around their dwelling-sites, keeping a wary eye against encroachment by orcs, goblins, humans, or other dangerous members of the outside world.

Kavaini provide important components needed in the creation of several magical items. The shell fragments of their eggs can be ground and used to formulate the magical inks necessary to inscribe the Priest spell *faerie fire*. Kavainus blood is often used in the manufacture of *platemail of etherealness*—several drops are spilled onto each metal plate as it is being hammered into shape by the armorer.

A kavainus egg can be sold for about 1,500 gp in the open market; hatchlings can sell for as high as 2,500 gp.

Arsalon

One of the more unusual of the greater drakes, the arsalon, or hive drake, generally conforms to the standard draconian shape, although its tail is shorter and thicker than normal and ends in a bony stinger like that of a purple worm or a dark naga. The creature's scales are large and thick, giving it the plated appearance of a giant insect. This effect is enhanced by the drake's two slim, backward-thrusting horns, which can be mistaken for antennae from a distance.

Arsalon range from a dusty yellow to tan to a light gray. Their batlike wings are often much darker in color, ranging from a coffee-brown to nearly black. The arsalon's body scales occasionally bear vertical stripes of a darker color along the edges, much like the stripes of a bee. While many believe them to be some kind of dragon/bee hybrid, arsalon are completely reptilian.

The arsalon's combat tactics differ depending upon its position. On land, it uses the standard claw/claw/bite routine common to most drakes, inflicting 1–10 points of damage with its sharp teeth and 1–6 points of damage with each set of its foreclaws. If airborne, the drake usually foregoes its bite attack and attacks first with its front claws, and then, if both are successful, swings its tail under its body and jabs at its prey with its bony stinger. The stinger inflicts 1–12 points of damage and forces the victim to make a successful saving throw vs. poison or be *slowed* for 1d10+2 rounds. While its victim is *slowed*, the arsalon takes full advantage, biting and stinging repeatedly while grasping its prey in its front claws. Repeated stings do not slow the victim longer but inflict normal damage. Because of the relative shortness of the arsalon's tail, it cannot be used to attack creatures from behind or to the side of the drake.

In addition, the arsalon sports a unique form of breath weapon, the result of a strange symbiosis between the drake and normal wasps. The arsalon secretes a wasp-attracting, nectarlike substance in its throat bladder. Over time, the bladder becomes home to an entire wasp nest, and the arsalon can excite the wasps simply by contracting its throat bladder and exerting pressure on their hive. This "cloud of wasps" breath weapon is similar to the *insect plague* spell but cannot be magically dispelled, nor does the swarm dissipate until the offending creatures (other than the arsalon itself) are out of sight. The enraged wasps do not stray far from the arsalon, and anyone caught in the swarm automatically suffers 1 point of damage per round, regardless of Armor Class. Spellcasting is not possible in the middle of a wasp swarm.

The symbiosis between arsalon and wasp benefits both creatures: The drake gains a mobile "attack force," while the wasps gain a permanent lair and can feed upon the scraps of food caught between the arsalon's teeth. The sweet-smelling chemical attractor that the arsalon uses to lure wasps into its mouth occasionally attracts other insects, such as bees, hornets, or yellowjackets. The arsalon doesn't care what type of insect it supports inside its throat bladder, so long as they can be "summoned to battle." Only one type of insect will be in a symbiotic relationship with any individual arsalon, although for the purposes of combat, the insect type has no bearing on the creature's "breath weapon."

Fortunately, the arsalon's "breath weapon" is a one-shot deal; once the wasps have been sent out into battle, the drake has no further breath weapon available during that combat and must rely upon its physical attacks. Because of its thick, plate-like scales, the arsalon

Retchenbeasts and arsalons have the most unusual breath weapons of the greater drakes.

is immune to the stings of wasps and other similar-sized creatures like bees and hornets.

Arsalon, like most of the greater drakes, are territorial creatures, seldom encountered in any numbers. They come together only in the springtime to mate, after which 4–7 eggs (1d4+3) are laid in a cluster at the base of a tree, roughly camouflaged with twigs and grass, then abandoned.

Arsalon seldom make permanent lairs, spending the night in one of a dozen locations: alongside a fallen tree, in a hastily constructed nest of intertwined branches, or under an outcropping of rock along a river bank. The bones of their prey are frequently strewn about these temporary lairs. Arsalon do not collect treasure, but valuable items are occasionally found alongside the remains of their victims.

Mostly because of the wasps inherently connected to the arsalon, few wilderness races have successfully domesticated them.

Retchenbeast

The retchenbeast, or muck drake, is not only the smallest of the greater drakes but also the ugliest. Rather than sporting the graceful, draconian form common to the other drakes, the retchenbeast resembles nothing so much as a giant, bloated toad with short, stumpy wings that can barely support its weight in flight. Like a toad, the creature's eyes bulge from the top of its head, allowing it to submerge all but its eyes under the swampy waters of its home territory. Its neck is much shorter and thicker than those of the other drakes. All four feet are webbed, allowing for a faster swimming rate. The retchenbeast retains the standard drake's long, serpentine tail, which looks misplaced on the creature.

When clean, retchenbeasts are a grayish-brown, with irregularly sized scales. (The larger ones often have wartlike projections on them, further enhancing the likeness to a giant toad.) However, clean retchenbeasts are rarely seen, for they are habitually covered in the muck and slime of the swamps, bogs, and quagmires that they call home. While not swift, retchenbeasts are excellent swimmers, able to keep afloat even in quicksand and bogs.

A retchenbeast prefers to stay submerged up to its protruding eyeballs until ready to spring out at its prey. Such victims receive a –2 penalty to their surprise rolls. Inherently lazy creatures, retchenbeasts prefer to dispatch their victims with as little fuss as possible. They can bite for 2–9 points of damage (their wide, froglike mouths are filled with sharp teeth) and make two claw attacks per round for 1–4 points of damage each, but they prefer grappling prey and holding them underwater until they drown.

In addition to their standard attacks, retchenbeasts have a revolting breath weapon they can bring to bear—vomiting up a sticky, sludge-like liquid from the storage pouch in their throats. The victim of a retchenbeast's "muck"

attack (only one human-sized individual can be targeted with each attack) must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or experience extreme nausea, striking at –2 to hit until able to wash the gunk off. The muck has a tendency to drip into the victim's eyes and slows movement to the extent that the victim's AC is penalized by 2 points whether or not the victim makes a successful saving throw vs. poison. In addition, anyone within 10 feet of a "mucked" victim (with the exception of retchenbeasts themselves, who are immune) must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or strike at –1 to hit for 1–4 rounds due to the stench.

The retchenbeast must have access to a fetid, swampy region to replenish its disgusting breath weapon, for the creature's "muck" attack draws heavily on the mud and mire of the swampland environment. The retchenbeast can employ its breath weapon once every 3 rounds, so long as it has access to swamp muck and mire. Salivary glands help "store" a dose of wet muck in the retchenbeast's throat bladder for nearly a month between uses.

Because of the damp environment in which retchenbeasts live and the thick coating of slime and ooze normally found covering their bodies, retchenbeasts save at +1 against acid attacks and suffer one less point per die of damage from acid-based attacks. (Acid still inflicts a minimum of 1 point of damage per die, however.)

Retchenbeasts are usually solitary, although occasionally a small group occupies the same general territory. This isn't a form of cooperation, though—each retchenbeast looks solely after its own interests and ignores the others around it. Mating occurs in the spring, with a small clutch of 2–7 small, leathery eggs abandoned among the cat-tails and rushes. Retchenbeasts do not keep permanent lairs, wandering from place to place in search of food.

Retchenbeasts prefer fresh meat but are not above devouring carrion. They often hang around pools of quicksand, waiting to gobble up anyone or anything that falls in and becomes trapped.

Although not as stately as the other greater drakes (much less dragons), retchenbeasts are nevertheless used as aerial steeds—although they predominantly serve lizard man and bullywug masters. They prefer to stay around the swamplands whenever possible, but domesticated retchenbeasts can be coaxed into flying just about anywhere. Lizard men often use their mounted retchenbeasts as aerial spies, allowing them to monitor large areas. Though not as frequently found in the service of human or demihuman adventurers, a muck drake could be a useful mount to a swamp Druid or Ranger.

Silislithis

A silislithis's scales are tiny and close-set, giving the creature a sleekness that allows it to glide through the water with supple grace. A bony frill flanks each side of the silislithis's head, protecting the gill slits that allow the creature to breathe while underwater. The silislithis's powerful wings are used not only in flight but also as fins while the creature swims, slicing through the water with powerful strokes. A silislithis has webbing between its digits, and the tail sports fins on both the dorsal and ventral sides. Coloration ranges through the blues, aquamarines, and greens, with the wings usually a shade or two lighter than the overall body color. Silislithi are also known as "sea drakes."

In water, a silislithis usually attacks first with its bite for 1–10 points of damage and, if successful, follows up with claw attacks using its forelimbs for 1–8 points of damage. (The silislithis swims with its legs pressed close to the sides of its body, as this streamlining allows the creature to move faster through the water.) On land, it uses all three attacks in a single round, usually targeted against a single foe.

In addition, the silislithis has a breath weapon, but it is usable only while out of the water. Silislithi fill their throat bladders with sea water, then compress the bladder to shoot a high-speed stream of water at opponents. The force of this watery breath weapon acts as the geyser effect of a *decanter of endless water*, forcing the target to make a Dexterity check at a –6 penalty or be knocked over. Those knocked over automatically lose initiative the next round and must spend the round getting back on their feet. (No attacks can be made the round immediately after being knocked over.)

The silislithis can employ its breath weapon every other round, so long as it refills its throat bladder between uses. The breath weapon is ineffective underwater, but the bladder is put to a different use in that environment—by closing off its esophageal valve, the bladder's contents can be forced through two vents just behind the creature's wings. This "jet propulsion" mirrors the movement capabilities of the octopus and squid, giving the silislithis an additional spurt of speed while swimming.

The silislithis saves against cold-based attacks at +1 and suffers –1 point of damage per die (minimum of 1 point per die) from such attacks.

Silislithi spend most of their day in the ocean, chasing prey. At night, they lair in seaside caves along rocky coasts. They are solitary creatures, coming together only in the springtime to mate. The female is allowed to share the male's cave during this time; once the eggs are laid (2d4 in a cluster), the male abandons his lair to the female and the new generation of silislithi. The female stays only long enough to guard the eggs until they hatch, at which time she departs as well. The cave is then shared by the newborn silislithi for about two years, at which time it becomes the sole property of the largest of the brood, who chases the others away.

Silislithi are easily tamed when young, and are used as mounts by several aquatic races—chiefly locathah, aquatic elves, and tritons (although the tritons greatly prefer hippocampi). They are just as frequently used as steeds by surface-dwelling races that live along the coastal regions, as the air-breathers can usually make better use of the silislithis' flight abilities. In fact, many coastal cities have a small contingent of silislithis cavalry, used not only as flying guards but more importantly as firefighters: The silislithi fill their storage bladders in the ocean, then are flown to the site of a burning building and discharge their bladder contents, dousing the flames.

Many air-breathing riders of silislithi wear a magical item that allows them to breathe underwater (*necklace of adaptation*,

helm of underwater action, pearl of the sirines) to take full advantage of their mount's movement abilities.

Rivilithis: The rivilithis, or river drake, is a freshwater version of the sea drake, able to breathe both air and fresh water (but not sea water, just as the silislithis cannot breathe fresh water). The rivilithis' coloration tends more toward the greens and grays, and it lacks the silislithis' resistance to cold-based attacks, but it is otherwise indistinguishable from its ocean-dwelling cousin.

Fumarandi

One of the smaller of the greater drakes, the fumarandi, or smoke drake, is nonetheless a formidable and fearsome-looking opponent. Its overlapping scales are the color of charcoal, and its eyes glow like burning embers. A black tongue the color of charred wood flickers frequently out of its mouth, like that of a snake or a lizard. The beast's claws are black as well, as are the twin horns that curve back from the creature's skull. Much like the firedrake, the creature gives off a shimmer of heat, although the fumarandi is not uncomfortable to the touch and can be ridden safely without fear of burning one's saddle, boots, or clothes. Its internal heat shows up exceptionally well to infravision, though.

The relatively small fumarandi are excellent mounts for smaller humanoids.

Like most greater drakes, the fumarandi attacks three times each round, once with its teeth (inflicting 1–10 points of damage) and once with each of its front claws (2–7 points of damage each). It prefers targeting a single opponent and usually sticks with that opponent until it is slain or the fumarandi is driven away.

The smoke drake is named not only for its coloration but also after its particular breath weapon. Once every three rounds, the creature can expel a 10' × 10' × 20' cloud of smoke at opponents. The smoke is usually exhaled through the beast's nostrils and forms a dark cloud of vapors that obscures and chokes the drake's enemies. Creatures caught in the confines of a fumarandi's breath weapon must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or choke and cough for 1d4 rounds; during this time they suffer a –2 penalty to hit and a +2 penalty to AC. Choking victims also suffer 1–4 points of damage due to smoke inhalation. The fumarandi is immune to the effects of its own breath weapon and can see through the smoke cloud as well. To others in the cloud, whether they make their save or not, visibility drops to 5 feet. Fumarandi habitually start an attack by blowing a cloud of smoke at their opponents, then rushing in for a claw/claw/bite routine. Unless in a closed environment (like the back of a cave), the smoke cloud dissipates in 1–3 rounds.

Fumarandi are immune to normal fire and heat-based attacks, saving against magical fire (a *fireball* or *flame strike* spell, the breath weapon of a red dragon, and so on) at +2 and reducing damage by 1 point per die (although each die still inflicts a minimum of 1 point of damage).

Fumarandi are solitary by nature, fiercely defending their territories against others of their kind. They mate in the late fall, with the female laying and abandoning a clutch of 1d6 eggs in the back of a cave. Fumarandi eggs radiate heat and can be used as a source of warmth during the cold winter—a fact that encourages other creatures lairing in the cave to keep the eggs protected. The eggs hatch in the spring, exploding in a burst of flame that inflicts 1d6 points of damage to anyone within a 10'-radius area but causing no harm to the hatchling drakes.

Fumarandi are attracted to small, shiny objects. Their lairs often contain a handful of small gemstones they have acquired from previous victims.

Much like the firedrake's pyrophoric blood, the fumarandi's digestive enzymes burn the food it swallows rather than dissolve it. The fumarandi's stomach lining is the equivalent of a layer of smoldering coals, and its throat bladder is used like a bellows in a furnace. This is what grants the creature its smoke cloud breath weapon; in addition, wisps of smoke stream from the drake's mouth when it eats, as the food is burned deep in its stomach. The fumarandi is a carnivore by choice,

although it supplements its diet with leaves and twigs between meals of freshly caught prey. ("Kindling" snacks help keep its internal "furnace" stoked.)

If captured when young, a fumarandi can be trained to serve as a riding mount. The chances of successful domestication decrease with each year of the creature's life, though, for they value their freedom as adults and become ill-tempered in the wild. Those trained from an early age as steeds perform quite admirably. Because of their smaller size, fumarandi are often domesticated by goblins.

Fumarandi eggshells are sometimes used in the creation of *rings of fire resistance*. When crushed to a fine powder, they may be used to create the ink necessary to record the Wizard spells *stinking cloud* and *fire shield* and the Priest spells *endure heat* and *resist fire* (but not their reversed forms, *endure cold* and *resist cold*). Unhatched eggs can be sold for as much as 2,000 gp each.

Drake-Rider Kits

Drake-Riders use their greater drake as battle mounts, adding the drakes' combat abilities to their own. Others seek to use the drake as a mobile reconnaissance platform with which to spy upon others. Still others become Drake-Riders as a service to their city or country, acting as messengers, couriers, firefighters, or mounted soldiers.

Regardless of why people become Drake-Riders, there are a number of kits that PCs can adopt when raising a greater drake as an aerial mount. Some kits are class-specific, while others can be chosen by characters from any class. Similarly, some kits are best matched with a specific subspecies of greater drake, while others can be used by riders of any type of drake. Many of these Drake-Rider kits can even be incorporated for use with other flying steeds, such as griffins, pegasi, or even nonliving "steeds" like a *carpet of flying* or *ebony fly* (one of the *figurines of wondrous power*).

Air Knight (Warrior)

The Air Knight is a soldier devoted to the defense of a city, or, less frequently, a single structure (the castle of the knight's liege, perhaps, or the mountain fortress of the sorcerer he or she serves). Air Knights are seldom found singly; instead, there is usually a small group of them working together to form a concentrated aerial defense. Large cities with enough resources may have scores of Air Knights patrolling the skies over their boundaries.

Air Knights fall into a military hierarchy, much like the town guards or the local militia. They are led by a captain, generally the most experienced of the Air Knights serving in the unit. A sergeant-at-arms oversees the general welfare of the other knights and their steeds, reporting directly to the captain.

Air Knights know the value of a trusted flying steed and take extremely good care of the mounts in their service. They are in turn trusted by their mounts, and the two often form an emotional attachment similar to that between a Paladin and his or her warhorse.

Role: Air Knights are seasoned warriors, often having come up from the ranks of the regular army. Most have prior experience riding horses into battle, and need only learn the intricacies of aerial combat to become adept Drake-Riders. They value the rigid military structure, as they know their exact place in the hierarchy. Air Knights tend to be of Lawful or Neutral alignments; Chaotic members often find the rules and regulations inherent to military society to be too constricting.

The majority of Air Knight units serve a defensive role for their cities, patrolling the borders and using the vantage points of their high-flying steeds to spot any approaching enemies, whether they be a marauding dragon or an army of footsoldiers intent upon conquest. While Air Knights might be sent out on an occasional offensive mission, they are generally reserved as defenders of the city, where their visible presence serves to make the populace feel more secure.

Most Air Knights are fiercely loyal toward the city they have chosen to protect. While paladinhood is not a requirement to become an Air Knight, many Paladins do take up the calling, often serving as high-ranking officers in an Air Knight unit. Air Knights generally have the good will of the people in the city that they protect. They wear distinctive uniforms in the city's colors and are easily recognizable by the people they serve.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Lance (any), Sword (any). *Recommended:* Shortbow, Light Crossbow. Most Air Knights prefer the lance when attacking enemy flying creatures. However, smaller melee weapons are useful as well, and the ability to attack at a distance with arrows or crossbow bolts, while difficult skills to master, come in extremely handy to the Air Knight.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Airborne Riding, (greater drake). *Recommended:* Animal Training (greater drake), Direction Sense, Endurance, Heraldry, Hands-Off Mount Control (see sidebar), Rope Use, Weather Sense.

Special Benefits: As noted above, Air Knights enjoy great popularity among the citizens they protect, receiving an automatic –2 bonus to reactions by the common folk of the city for which they work. They are also generally well loved by their steeds, with which they have spent a great deal of time and training. An Air Knight's mount, if treated well, remains extremely loyal to its master. While this is especially true of vandalraugs, such loyalty can be fostered in any of the other greater drakes as well.

Because their mission keeps them patrolling the skies, Air Knights are comfortable with heights and seldom suffer from vertigo.

Special Hindrances: The Air Knight's greatest hindrance is that all kit abilities depend upon having an aerial steed. Without a flying mount, the Air Knight is no more than a common Fighter. Furthermore, if an Air Knight's flying steed is slain, the Knight suffers a –1 attack penalty in all combat until such time that a similar bond of attachment and trust develops between the knight and a new riding mount. The length of time it takes for this bond to develop is left to the DM, but it generally forms after about a month of training daily together.

As part of an established military, the Air Knight also stands out among enemies of his or her city. Aggressors are not likely to treat captured Air Knights well, knowing the role they played in the defense of their city.

Wealth Options: Air Knight PCs begin play with the standard Warrior's allotment of 5d4 × 10 gp. Most Air Knights attain the kit after several years in the military, however, and thus start play with whatever wealth they have amassed during that time. An Air Knight must begin his or her career with at least a lance, a sword, and the best armor the Knight can afford. Depending upon the resources of the city the Air Knight serves, some or all necessary equipment might be issued at no cost.

Highly Prized Equipment: Whether issued or purchased on his or her own, an Air Knight's most prized possession is often a *ring of feather falling*, a pair of *winged boots*, or a similar magical item allowing self-sustained flight or at least protection from falling. These items are usually used only if the Air Knight is knocked from the saddle or if the steed is slain while in flight. Air Knights often invest quite a bit of money in a good saddle as well, strapping themselves onto their mounts in such a way as to prevent accidental dislodging. Saddles and harnesses often have a quick-release strap, allowing the Air Knight to "eject" from the steed if it is slain while in flight.

Sky Wizard (Wizard)

The Sky Wizard is the spellcasting counterpart to the Air Knight, riding out into battle to defend a city. However, while the Air Knight's goal is direct hand-to-hand aerial combat with the foe, a Sky Wizard prefers to keep enough distance from enemies to allow long-range attack spells to be brought to bear. Sky Wizards are often found serving in the ranks with a unit of Air Knights, or they might even form a small unit of their own. As far as numbers go, there are usually many more Air Knights than there are Sky Wizards, so a Drake-Rider unit may count itself lucky to have even one of these aerial spellcasters in its midst.

Like an Air Knight, a Sky Wizard feels a strong duty toward the defense of the city. However, while Air Knights tend to remain a defensive force seldom straying far from the cities they are sworn to protect, Sky Wizards' tactics are often heavily geared toward the offensive. They go forth to attack not only invading armies but any enemy whose death serves the city.

Sky Wizards are seldom found in leadership roles. This is not due to a lack of ability but rather a lack of desire—most Sky Wizards are loners, preferring to look after their own objectives rather than coordinating the movements of subordinates. The workings of magic generally keep the Sky Wizard busy enough without having to direct fighting men into aerial maneuvers; such tasks are best left to the Warriors. As they are given freer reign than the more heavily "militarized" Air Knights, Sky Wizards have no constraints against Chaotic alignments.

New Proficiency:

Hands-Off Mount Control

General, 1 slot, Wisdom

Some drake-rider kits require the character to perform actions involving the free use of his or her hands while mounted upon a steed. This ability is especially useful for Wizards and Priests, as many spells require elaborate somatic components. Other drake-riders might find it necessary to employ two-handed weapons such as bows or crossbows. In any case, when the rider's hands are otherwise employed, they cannot be used to direct the rider's mount.

The Hands-Off Mount Control nonweapon proficiency allows the rider to control his mount by means of pressure from his legs, a subtle shifting in weight, verbal commands, and so on. The proficiency allows the character to train his mount to respond to such subtle clues; it does not automatically invest such knowledge upon any mount the rider may use. The two must train together for 2d4+2 weeks before the mount can respond to the rider's commands.

The proficiency requires a riding mount of at least animal intelligence. It can be used on either land-based or aerial mounts.

Sky Wizards wear a distinctive uniform in the city's colors, although they do not wear armor. They disdain wearing the standard Wizard's robes, as they are not cut for comfortable riding astride an aerial mount. Instead, Sky Wizards prefer a simple outfit of tunic and pants.

Role: High-level Sky Wizards are often the "powerhouses" of the Air Knight units in which they serve. As such, they are defended by the Air Knights in battle, whose best interests lie in keeping the Sky Wizard safe from harm so that the Wizard may strike down the enemy from a distance. Sky Wizards avoid melee combat whenever possible, and so the kavainus is a popular choice of steed.

Not all Sky Wizards are members of an Air Knight unit, however; some work on their own, protecting their desolate castle dwellings from aerial attack. These Sky Wizards can be of just about any alignment, whereas those in service to a city lean toward the Good end of the spectrum.

Sky Wizards tend to fill their spell arsenals with long-range attack spells and those that enhance or protect their mount's flight abilities. A short list of favored spells includes *feather fall, light, magic missile, continual light, sleep, blindness, darkness 15' radius, Melf's acid arrow, fireball, flame arrow, fly, lightning bolt, Melf's minute meteors, protection from normal missiles, chain lightning, flesh to stone*, and *meteor swarm*.

Because they concentrate on aerial-based spellcraft, many Sky Wizards choose to become Air Elementalists (as described in the Tome of Magic).

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* Any.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Airborne Riding (greater drake). *Recommended:* Animal Training (greater drake), Direction Sense, Hands-Off Mount Control (see sidebar), Weather Sense.

Special Benefits: As part of a city's Air Knight unit, the Sky Wizard enjoys the same benefits—the reaction bonus from the city's populace and loyalty from his or her steed. Sky Wizards tend not to become as attached to their mounts as do Air Knights and thus do not suffer "withdrawal symptoms" if their current mount is slain.

Special Hindrances: The Sky Wizard's greatest hindrance is that he or she makes an excellent target for enemies. As the kit is specifically designed for those Wizards who fly into battle using flashy and dynamic spells, they are often the most visible target in the air and tend to attract quite a bit of attention from those trying to overcome the Sky Wizard's forces. For this reason, many Sky Wizards feel it necessary to have a personal "escort," usually of Air Knights, when they go out against their foes.

Wealth Options: The Sky Wizard receives the normal Wizard's starting wealth, (1d4+1) × 10 gp.

Highly Prized Equipment: Any magical item capable of doing long-range damage to enemies is prized by Sky Wizards. Favorites include *wands of lightning, wands of magic missiles, wands of fire, staves of the magi,* and *staves of power*. They also appreciate passive magical items that deflect or absorb spells, such as *brooches of shielding, rings of spell turning,* and ellipsoid *ioun stones*.

Storm Priest (Priest)

The Storm Priest is the Priest class's equivalent to the Warrior's Air Knight or the Wizard's Sky Wizard. Storm Priests traditionally ride their aerial mounts into battle. While often found as part of a city's Air Knight unit, a large city may have enough Storm Priests to form their own, separate unit.

As the name suggests, Storm Priests are often in charge of weather during battles. Depending upon circumstances, they might pray for clear skies, to make conditions optimal for their own aerial forces, or crashing thunder, the better to cause lightning strikes to fall upon enemy forces.

Storm Priests are found of many differing alignments. Those cities with a large number of Storm Priests have a predominantly Lawful assemblage, while Chaotic Storm Priests are usually happier as solo members in an Air Knight unit. Although Druids can become Storm Priests, most who take up the calling worship gods of weather, lightning, thunderstorms, and the like.

Not all Storm Priests are members of a regular army. Some are mercenary in nature, hiring themselves out to whichever band will pay for their services. Of all the Storm Priests, these individuals are the most likely to be of an Evil alignment, although not all mercenary Storm Priests are Evil.

Role: The Storm Priest has two main roles in battle: attacking enemies and defending the members of his or her own army. Both missions are usually accomplished with a wide variety of spells. Popular attack spells include *faerie fire, dust devil, spiritual hammer, call lightning, control winds, flame strike, transmute rock to mud, earthquake,* and *firestorm*. Defensive spells include *protection from evil, remove fear, obscurement, protection from lightning, wall of thorns,* and *weather summoning*. Naturally, the deity worshiped by the Storm Priest affects which spells the Priest may cast in battle, so not all Storm Priests have access to the same complement of spells.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* Any.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Airborne Riding (greater drake), Weather Sense. *Recommended:* Animal Training (greater drake), Astrology, Direction Sense, Local History, Hands-Off Mount Control (see sidebar), Religion.

Special Benefits: Storm Priests are well respected by the members of their army and the citizens they protect, receiving an automatic –2 bonus to reaction rolls when dealing with such people.

Storm Priests are often used to rally the soldiers of their armies. Knowing that they are being led into battle by the favored Priest of a powerful deity often causes an increase in the army's morale. As long as the Storm Priest remains visible, the soldiers of his or her army battle with a +1 bonus to morale ratings.

Special Hindrances: Like the Sky Wizard, the Storm Priest makes an excellent target by flying out in the open. Because of their frequent use of lightning and electrical-based spells, most Storm Priests refuse to wear metallic armor or carry metal shields, preferring instead to rely upon magical protection if possible.

In addition, as Storm Priests are credited with their own armies' boost of morale, they take it as their responsibility when their army begins to falter. As soon as the tide of battle starts to turn against the Storm Priest's army, the Priest strikes with a –1 attack penalty until the tide of battle turns back to his or her army's favor.

Wealth Options: Storm Priests begin play with the standard 3d6 × 10 gp of the Priest class. If part of a standard army, much of the Storm Priest's equipment (armor, weapons, saddle, etc.) may be supplied.

Highly Prized Equipment: Storm priests prize any weather-related magical items or weapons, such as *staves of thunder and lightning, javelins of lightning,* and *hammers of thunderbolts*. Because of their reluctance to wear metallic armor, they also highly value items providing magical protection, such as *rings of protection, cloaks of protection, bracers of defense,* and nonmetallic magical armor.

Wind Scout (Rogue)

The Wind Scout is often part of a fielded army and is primarily used for aerial reconnaissance. The Scout's principal task is to determine the lay of the land, paying specific attention to details such as the terrain, habitations, and enemy movements and reporting back to his or her superiors. The Wind Scout does this upon the back of a flying mount, such as any of the greater drakes.

Wind Scouts traditionally work alone, scouting ahead with only the companionship of their flying steed, with whom they form a close bond. They realize they are performing a useful function and greatly prefer their role as an information gatherer over other roles more directly involved with combat. This doesn't mean that scouts are afraid of fighting, merely that they recognize combat is not one of their greatest strengths.

Wind Scouts can be Lawful or Chaotic. Many enjoy the sense of being the "eyes and ears of the general" and have a deep pride in the importance of their contributions.

Role: A Wind Scout's primary role is to learn the overall lay of the land and report it back to the rest of the unit. This is most often done while soaring at great heights above the land, where vast distances can be seen at once. However, upon occasion, it is necessary

for the scout to get a closer view, and for such occurrences the scout must rely upon strong infiltration abilities. Hiding in Shadows and Moving Silently serve the Wind Scout much more than Picking Pockets or Opening Locks, and most Wind Scouts develop these abilities before others. The Wind Scout might need to adopt a disguise or at least be able to pass as a neutral party; as such, most Wind Scouts do not wear their army's colors or carry anything that would give away their true affiliation.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* Any. Most of the weapons employed by Wind Scouts tend to be small and easily carried and/or hidden. Daggers are more popular than broadswords among those who follow this vocation.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Airborne Riding (greater drake), Reading/Writing. *Recommended:* Alertness*, Cartography (as detailed in Lloyd Brown III's "Working Class Wizards" in *DRAGON Magazine* #253), Direction Sense, Disguise, Information Gathering*, Hands-Off Mount Control (see sidebar), Observation*, Reading Lips, Survival*, Weather Sense. Proficiencies with an asterisk (*) are detailed in *The Complete Thief's Handbook*.

Special Benefits: Wind Scouts enjoy special status in the camps of their armies, usually reporting directly to the army commanders. This gives them a special relationship with powerful individuals, people who probably won't mind "pulling a few strings" to help out the Scout if he or she asks for an occasional favor. They also gain the privileges and respect that are associated with being a military member, while bypassing many of the hardships that go along with the job. For instance, Wind Scouts seldom march on foot with the regular soldiers, nor must they devote as much time training in weapons practice. Instead, they spend most of their days soaring on their mounts above the treelines, taking in the details of the surrounding terrain, then flying back to base camp where a cozy tent waits for them.

Wind Scouts are also in one of the few "respectable" jobs available to members of the Rogue class—at least as seen by many military commanders. Their special skills earn them the respect and admiration of even the hardest-nosed generals.

The Storm Priest controls a potent weather-related arsenal.

Special Hindrances: A Wind Scout without a flying steed is like a fish out of water. Most Wind Scouts take to the job because of a love of flying, and even if their skills aren't particularly needed, they take every opportunity to saddle up their drakes and head for the skies. If a Wind Scout goes for a week without being able to fly, the Scout becomes sullen and grumpy, causing a +1 reaction penalty to those he or she meets. In addition, many of the army's regular forces resent the special treatment Wind Scouts receive and do what they can to remind the prima donna just where the true backbone of the army lies. This can take the form of anything from snide remarks to cruel practical jokes at the Wind Scout's expense. Of course, such occurrences only reinforce the Scout's views on the pleasures to be had alone in the air with his or her trusted mount on an intelligence-gathering mission.

Wealth Options: Wind Scouts begin with the standard 2d6 × 10 gp allotted to all members of the Rogue class. As with Air Knights, much of the Wind Scouts' equipment (saddle, armor, weapons, etc.) may be supplied by the military, depending upon the size and wealth of the army.

Highly Prized Equipment: Wind Scouts value magical items that increase the ability to see: *eyes of the eagle, gems of seeing, rings of x-ray vision*, and the like. They also prize nonmagical means such as spyglasses and are seldom found without blank parchment, inks, and scroll tubes with which to make and carry maps of the areas they scout out.

Johnathan M. Richards has started a modest collection of dragon statuary that is completely outnumbered by his wife Mary's vast unicorn collection. A tiny fraction of her unicorns reside in a 6'-tall glass curio cabinet; the others remain in storage until the Richards find a bigger house.

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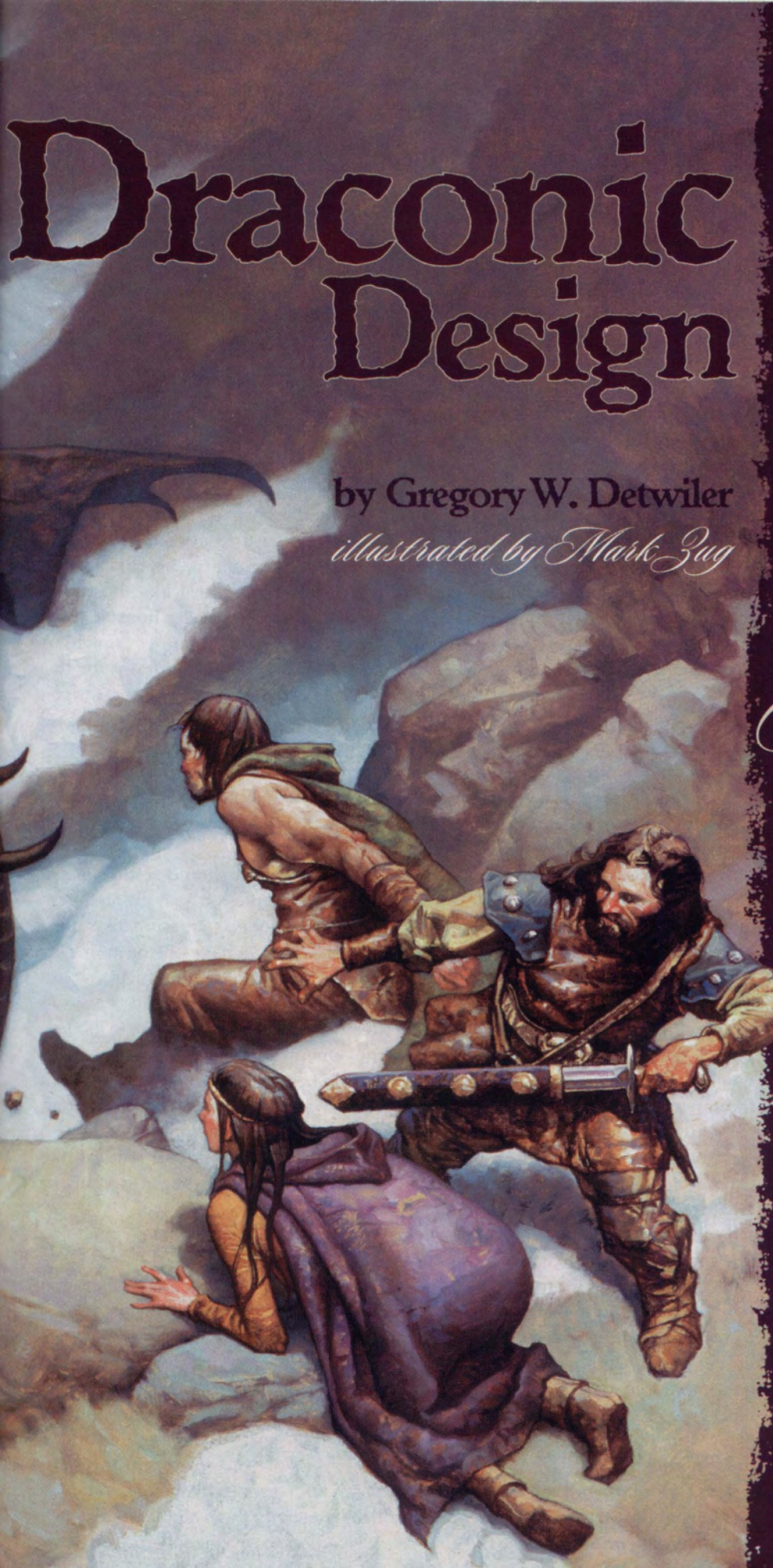
Draconic Design



All dragons are not created equal.

by Gregory W. Detwiler

illustrated by Mark Zug

Any player who reads the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® volumes can memorize enough to defeat any dragon in the AD&D® game. The standard solution is to create new dragon species, but that takes a lot of work.

Creating variety in standard dragons is not a new idea. Simple solutions like changing color or breath weapons have been presented long ago. More recently, Paul Fraser's article "Building a Better Dragon," in *DRAGON® MAGAZINE* #248, suggests giving dragons additional powers such as increased spell ability, spell-like powers, and other unique abilities without creating new species. This is a step in the right direction, but DMs can take it even further.

Possible Dracoforms

One of the easiest ways to confuse players about a dragon's identity is to give it a different color. But what happens when they encounter a white, acid-spitting dragon in a northern swamp? Is it an albino black dragon, a white dragon with a different breath weapon, or an entirely new subspecies of dragon?

Another solution is to eliminate the standard AD&D dragon species as such, though keeping their statistics. Instead, a DM can use dragon "templates," each with its own distinct physical form yet with plenty of room for individual variations in appearance. The DM can then assign breath weapons, spells, spell-like powers, and other special abilities to each dragon to make it unique.

DMs can keep the statistics of the standard dragon but change the outward appearance every time. It's simple to assume a "green dragon's" jaws cause the same amount of biting damage whether they are the standard shape, a beak like that of a snapping turtle, or the jaws of a crocodile. If the thing looks different, players won't have any idea that it's a green dragon—so far as the statistics go—unless they peek at the DM's notes. This way, DMs can keep the standard AD&D game tables for age, Hit Dice, damage per physical attack and breath weapon, Magic Resistance, and so on, and concentrate on individualizing the physical appearance of each dragon.

DMs creating new dragons can choose from the tables in this article or roll randomly to determine a new dragon's form. "Crafted" dracoforms are much more likely to seem realistic, while randomly determined shapes might generate creatures owing more to chaos than to the DM's imagination.

Table 1: Dracoform Colors

1d20	Result
1	Blue
2	Green
3	Purple
4	Red
5	Yellow
6	Orange
7	Black
8	White
9	Brown
10	Gray
11	Gold
12	Silver
13	Platinum
14	Copper
15	Brass
16	Bronze
17	Electrum
18	Cinnibar
19	Steel
20	Orichalcum (orange-gold)

Table 2: Color Patterns

1d10	Result
1	Stripes
2	Leopard Spots
3	Dotlike Spots
4	Jaguar Rosettes
5	Irregular Spots
6	Dark Above, Light Below
7	Light Above, Dark Below
8	Solid Color
9	Mottling
10	Chameleon

Dracoform Templates

The Avian Dragon

This is the two-legged dragon with wings, like the wyvern, whose name comes from *wivere*, the Saxon word for "serpent." It can also resemble the birdlike *hai riyo*, or dragon bird, of the Orient. Avian dragons look like reptilian birds of prey, with metallic scales instead of feathers and possibly with a tooth-filled mouth and clawed wings like the prehistoric Archaeopteryx, or like a regular wyvern or a pterosaur. A potent tail weapon like that of the wyvern is possible but not necessary, though a tail weapon can be used as a substitute for an additional breath weapon, since this creature can make claw attacks only while flying. If this creature collects treasure, a prehensile tail could serve as an extra hand in carrying sacks of loot. Such a beast should have a speed of no more than 12 while on the ground; flying speed can range from 21 to upward of 42 for the smaller, lighter types. Combat damage should be comparable to that of the wyvern or large birds of prey, including the giant eagle and the roc, depending on the dragon's age.

This type of dragon can dwell farther away from its victims than many other dragon types simply because the gift of flight enables it to cover vast amounts of ground with incredible swiftness. Aside from its physical attacks, it can also attack castles and cities by dropping boulders and similar heavy objects on them; in a mountainous region, it would have an almost unlimited supply of ammunition.

The Behemoth

The behemoth is a massive, slow, and powerful beast. This wingless creature is quadrupedal, with bulging muscles that give the beast the general build of a bear, or perhaps a muscle-bound, sabre-toothed tiger. It may have a shell, in the tradition of the tarrasque (assumed in legend to be a type of dragon rather than a separate species). It might have sharp, bearlike claws; blunt, powerful claws like those of a ground sloth; or cloven hooves, since the thing walks about so much. A lashing tail is more important for this creature than for some other dragon types, as it is built for power, not speed. Behemoths also make good use of horns and tusks. They inflict formidable claw and bite damage, starting at 1d12/1d12/2d20 and increasing with size and age.

The behemoth should settle close to civilization, unless it's an unintelligent beast. If it collects treasure like most dragons, it must have one or more rich sources to raid or from which to exact tribute. Otherwise, it could starve to death trekking to and fro due to its slow movement rate. This massive beast should be powerful enough to smash a castle wall or city gate, wade in through a barrage of whatever the defenders on the walls throw at it, and haul off the wealth of an entire treasure vault or marketplace.

The Classic Dragon

Everyone knows what a classic dragon looks like: a long-necked, long-tailed reptilian monster with wings and four legs. This form is included because you needn't abandon it entirely under this new system. In fact, players being the suspicious sorts they are, putting a dragon of the old form into the campaign after a series of newer versions is liable to terrify them all the more.

Needless to say, the full array of powers and combat actions are available to

the classic dragon, which might live anywhere and collect as much treasure as it likes. Check the *Monstrous Manual*® book for the complete description and templates.

The Hunting Beast

This creature is superficially shaped like the behemoth, but it is far more slender, built for speed and agility rather than brute force. The basic posture and body shape is that of a wolf, big cat, hyena, or weasel. (Note that the latter shape is best if the creature lairs in narrow caves.) The hunting beast's running and swimming speed should be comparable to those of these animals. The closest dragon of myth to this template is the *sirrush* of Babylonian and Assyrian legend. You don't need many fancy spell-like powers and breath weapons with this one, as it can use standard claw and biting attacks, and it might have a tail lash as well. Wings are optional, making the hunting beast similar to the dragonne, as well as allowing you to place it deeper in the wilderness than the other types of dragons. Combine the standard dragon with the image of the hunting beast that scares the living daylights out of wilderness travelers by their campfires, and you have a fearsome monster.

The Lindwyrm

This is the two-limbed dragon, referred to as the *linnorm* by the Norse and the *lindwyrm* by others. (Marco Polo reported seeing several lindwyrms on the road to Cathay.) Exactly how you portray this creature is up to you. It can look like a serpent, balancing awkwardly on two legs, or it could have the appearance of a flesh-eating dinosaur that has evolved sufficiently to lose its forelimbs completely. In the latter case, the legs are farther up the body than those of regular carnosaurs, so the creature is well balanced. The creature's speed on land should be comparable to that of the large carnosaurs found in the *Monstrous Manual* book.

As with the wyrm, the lindwyrm should rely on breath weapons and innate magical powers rather than physical attacks, save for biting attacks and a lashing tail (often with a spiked or macelike weapon at the end). Unable to make a claw attack, this creature should have a particularly powerful bite and the ability to swallow medium-sized prey whole. Because this beast keeps its head high off the ground, it could carry a large sack of treasure in its mouth. A non-flier, the lindwyrm must live fairly close to the civilized communities it plunders.

The Mammut

The *mammut* (the root word of our "mammoth") appears in legends from Siberia. There are two basic forms for this template: a massive, hulking, clawed form like a giant mole or the mammut itself. The latter's shape is reminiscent of the behemoth, or a standard lizard shape.

Whether it travels by burrowing with its powerful forelimbs or has some magical means of tunneling, the mammut can move underground with surprising speed; indeed, its digging speed could be comparable to the walking and flying speeds of normal dragons. Biting and clawing damage in combat should be similar to that of the behemoth, if it is of the mole form, or conventional dragons, if it is built like a giant lizard.

This type of dragon threatens subterranean races because of its ability to attack their cities at any point, possibly even burrowing through the cavern ceiling and dropping down into the city center. Mammuts tend to have extra-heavy armor to withstand the scraping of the soil and rocks through which they burrow. If your specimen has few special powers, compensate by boosting its AC a step or two. Needless to say, such a creature can also easily pass through stone or earthen castle walls.

The mammut is the lucky dog among dragons when it comes to treasure. Not only can it raid any settlement, but also it can gather gold, silver, platinum, and other precious minerals in raw ore form directly from the rock. A good way to introduce this dragon into the campaign is to have a group of miners find the rich vein they are working suddenly come to an abrupt end, with nothing before them but a great empty cavern.

Table 3: Behemoth Limbs

1d4	Result
1	Bearlike; Sharp Claws
2	Blunt Claws (sloth)
3	Hooves
4	Pillarlike Limbs

Table 4: Lindwyrm Shapes

1d4	Result
1	Snake with Two Legs
2	Dragon with Two Legs
3	Standard Carnosaur
4	Armless Carnosaur

Table 5: Wyrm Shapes

1d4	Result
1	Standard Snake
2	Snake with Horns
3	Crested Snake
4	Dragon-Headed Snake

Table 6: Hunting Beast Shapes

1d4	Result
1	Big Cat (lion, tiger, etc.)
2	Wolf
3	Hyena
4	Weasel

Table 7: Avian/Wyvern Shapes

1d8	Result
1	True Wyvern
2	Metal-Scaled Bird
3	Archaeopteryx (bird with teeth and clawed wings)
4	Pterosaur, No Crest or Tail
5	Pterosaur with Long Tail
6	Pterosaur with Crest
7	Pterosaur with Long Tail and Crest
8	Winged Serpent (with or without legs)

Table 8: Sea Serpent Shapes

1d8	Result
1	Plesiosaur (long neck and flippers)
2	Protoplesiosaur (webbed feet instead of flippers)
3	Turtlelike (dragon turtle, lung wang, archelon, etc.)
4	Crocodile (with normal or webbed feet)
5	Mosasaur
6	Fish (like ichthyosaur)
7	Swimming Lizard (like marine iguana)
8	Sea Snake (flat-sided body and tail for sculling)

Table 9: Dragon Heads

1d8	Result
1	Standard Dragon
2	Oriental Dragon
3	Snake
4	Turtle (beaked)
5	Lizard
6	Crocodile
7	Carnosaur
8	Ceratopsian (particularly good for hoofed behemoth)

Table 10: Ceratopsian-Style Skulls

1d12	Result
1	No Horns, Short Frill
2	Long Nasal Horn, Short Frill
3	Forward-Curving Nasal Horn, Short Frill
4	Bony Knob on Snout, Short Frill
5	Nasal Horn, Long Frill Spines, Short Frill
6	Short Nasal Horn, Long Brow Horns, Short Frill
7	Short Nasal Horn, Long Brow Horns, Long Frill
8	Short Frill, Brow Horns, Nasal Horn
9	Short Brow Horns, Short Nasal Horn, Long Frill
10	Short Nasal Horn & Frill, Long Brow Horns Face Sideways
11	Short Nasal Horn, Long Brow Horns, Short Frill, Spikes on Cheeks
12	Short Forward-Curving Nose Horn, with Pair of Large Horns at Back of Short Frill

Table 11: Back Adornments

1d12	Result
1	Fish Fin
2	Pelycosaur Fin (like dimetrodon)
3	Stegosaur Plates, Single Row
4	Stegosaur Plates, Double Row
5	Stegosaur Plates, Alternating Rows
6	Single Row of Spines
7	Double Row of Spines
8	Ankylosaur-type Carapace
9	Ankylosaur-type Carapace Covered with Spines
10	Bony Knobs over Back
11	Turtle Shell
12	Armadillo Shell (segmented armor)

Table 12: Horns On Head

1d10	Result
1	Ceratopsian (see **Table 10**)
2	Single Nasal Horn
3	Double Nasal Horn
4	Triple Nasal Horn
5	Single Forehead Horn (like unicorn)
6	Pair of Curved Horns on Sides of Head
7	Pair of Straight Horns on Sides of Head
8	Head Covered with Short Spines
9	Head Covered with Long Spines
10	Combination, roll twice

Table 13: Other Head Adornments

1d10	Result
1	Short Tusks (like boar)
2	Long Tusks (like elephant)
3	Short Trunk (like tapir)
4	Long, Prehensile Trunk (like elephant)
5	Sabre Teeth (or poisonous fangs)
6	Multiple Sets of Sabre Teeth (of varying lengths)
7	Domelike Bony Skull (like pachycephalosaurus)
8	Pairs or Sets of Bony Knobs
9	Broad Skin Flaps (like Australian frilled lizard)
10	Combination, roll twice

The Oriental Dragon

This is the standard oriental dragon form: a serpentine beast like a normal wyrm but with four limbs and possibly wings, though a special organ or magical gem in the head provides the power of flight. The head often has twisted antlers and tentaclelike whiskers.

Most oriental dragons fall into this category, though some exceptions may exist. The earth dragon (li lung) could belong to either the behemoth or the hunting beast template, while the sea dragon (lung wang) is more like a sea serpent. As with the wyrm, the oriental dragon can dwell on land or in the water with equal facility. Essentially a skinnier variant of the classic dragon shape, this creature has all the power and ability to gather treasure; its speed and damage in combat are identical to those of standard dragons.

The Sea Serpent

Maritime myths gave birth to this creature, the dragon that lives in the sea and eventually comes up from the ocean depths to destroy all life. This template starts with the Leviathan legend and persists in modern times with reports of creatures like the Loch Ness monster, Nessie. Its standard shape is that of the plesiosaur: a long-necked dinosaur with four flippers instead of legs, though legs with webbed feet are also suitable for this template. Other variants include the crocodile or mosasaur shape (the latter resembling the gargouille of medieval French folklore), the sea turtle shape (like the dragon turtle or the oriental lung wang), and the fishlike form (like a draconic ichthyosaur). The last shape should be used only if the sea dragon need never move onto dry land.

The sea serpent should be extremely long and large enough to sink any ship. The creature's speed and damage in combat should be comparable to the appropriate marine reptiles at young ages, while the older beasts are the size of large whales. Those forms that can travel out of water, however, should never have a land movement rate greater than 12.

Sea dragons are tribute-collectors. Payment of tribute generally entails sailing directly over the dragon's lair and dumping the loot overboard. If the dragon raids to collect its treasure, it concentrates on ships rather than coastal communities, either restricting its attacks to ships that pass in the immediate vicinity of its lair or else contenting itself with killing or driving off the crew, then towing its prize home before sinking it.

The Wyrm

Based on Norse and Saxon mythology, this is the dragon-as-snake template. As such, it needs the most modification in regard to physical combat. It can dwell in a terrestrial or aquatic habitat with equal ease; its form makes it well suited for narrow-tunneled caverns no other dragon form could occupy.

Folklore commonly portrays these "wyrms" as dwelling in rivers, lakes, or even wells. Wyrms generally have a movement rate of 12 on land, with a swimming speed of 18. They do not fly, though the DM should feel free to introduce variants with a magical gem or other organ in its head that enables the beast to fly in the manner of the oriental dragons.

This creature lacks variety in physical attacks. The DM should adjust for this deficiency with a lavish use of spell-like powers and multiple breath weapons. A poisonous bite and acidic body secretions are also good additions. The tail should definitely be used as a weapon, either as a simple whip or as a constrictor. Additional tail weaponry like a bony club or spikes are also possible, but too much elaboration can impede the creature's slithering, and it is slow enough to begin with. The wyrm swallows its prey whole like a true snake, and it feeds only near its lair.

More than any other dragon, the wyrm gains its treasure by compelling intelligent races around it to pay tribute or face attack. This is, of course, because its form makes it physically impossible to pick up and carry anything. Thus, these dragons must have some kind of communication ability, either normal speech or telepathy, if they are to obtain wealth. If you treat it as an unintelligent beast, you can forget this part. The original legends do present wyrms as mindless destroyers.

Example: Frostfire

Our innovative DM, Jim, wants a behemoth dragon. His campaign is currently taking place on an Italian-style peninsula with lots of prosperous city states along the coast, while the narrow neck of land in the interior is still wilderness, allowing the nonflying dragon easy access to most of the city states.

Jim has always wanted to create a dragon with both fire and frost as breath weapons and this seems like a good opportunity. Rather than simply rolling on each table, Jim looks over what's available and makes logical choices for the desired result.

Frost and fire are the breath weapons of the white and red dragons, which are, respectively, the smallest and largest of chromatic dragon types. Thus, in determining size, Jim decides to pick an intermediate form, giving his creation the size and general stats of a huge ancient green dragon. He decides that the beast is a mottled red and white coloration, once again using his initial choice of breath weapons to make his decision rather than roll randomly.

The hulking body and powerful limbs of Frostfire are reminiscent of those of a prehistoric ground sloth. The dragon is covered with scales, however, and its back is covered with knobby armor, again like the bony nodes in the skin of a real ground sloth. (Jim has studied his paleontology well, so he notes that Frostfire walks on the edges rather than the soles of its clawed feet. This sort of detail can add much to a redesigned dragon.)

Frostfire's body ends in a stiff tail of moderate length, sheathed in segmented links of armor. Although not particularly flexible, the tail makes a suitable mace or club, and it is equally useful in striking a living opponent or smashing down man-made structures.

Frostfire's head resembles that of an ordinary snapping turtle, except for the massive bony dome that rises from the skull that is used for smashing down walls. The head and jaws are large enough to swallow man-sized (Size M) prey whole.

Frostfire, like any good behemoth, garners the wealth of the city states by smashing holes in their walls with its head, lumbering in, and taking everything it can gather. If the defensive walls are of a particularly hard stone or even metal, Frostfire hits them with alternating blasts of fire and frost; the massive extremes of heat and cold crack even the hardest walls, which the dragon then sunders with blows of its armored tail. Although of Low intelligence, Frostfire knows that it likes pretty, shiny things like precious metals and jewelry. If the dragon finds that there's so much small stuff that it can't carry the loot in its huge paws without dropping most of it, the beast will order the surviving inhabitants to seal the treasure in barrels or chests, which it can easily handle. Frostfire is not a sparkling conversationalist, grunting out orders like "Give treasure!" and "Pack treasure!" By the same token, its Low Intelligence (7) means that Frostfire cannot cast spells.

Because it breathes both fire and frost, the dragon is immune to ordinary fire (including burning oil) and even the most severe nonmagical temperatures, suffering only half damage from magical fire and cold-based attacks, and then only if Frostfire fails its saving throw. The dimensions of its breath weapons are those of a huge, ancient green dragon. For any other information, Jim just uses the standard AD&D stats for a huge, ancient green dragon—but he doesn't let the players know it.

Dragons are an integral part of fantasy gaming, yet they are quickly reduced to neat stereotypes. Throw away the old stats, and make each dragon a customized, tailor-made monster in its own right. Not only will you dispel player ennui but also you will ensure that they never look at dragons in the same way again.

Greg Detwiler discovered the AD&D game, as well as DRAGON Magazine, *in the late 70s. His first work appeared in issue #99, and he's been busy writing articles ever since.*

Table 14: Dragon Tail Types

1d20	Result
1	Standard Dragon Tail (spadelike blade at end)
2	Fishlike Tail
3	Slender, Whiplike
4	Muscular, Constriction
5	Single Row of Spikes
6	Double Row of Spikes
7	Long, Swordlike Blade at Tip
8	Ankylosaur-style Bony Mace
9	Scorpion Sting (wyvern)
10	Muscular, Prehensile
11	Covered with Shooting Spines (like manticore)
12	Stiff, Covered with Segmented Armor
13	Rattlesnake Rattle
14	Long Spike at Tip; Can Arch Over Back To Strike
15	Covered with Spikes on All Sides
16	Bony Mace with One Spike
17	Bony Mace with Two Spikes
18	Bony Mace with Four Spikes
19	Bony Mace Covered With Spikes
20	Short Stub; Useless In Combat

Table 15: Breath Weapons

1d12	Result
1	Sleep Gas
2	Poison Gas
3	Frost
4	Fire
5	Lightning
6	Heat Lightning (combines effects of results 4 and 5)
7	Salt Spray (blinding)
8	Sodium Spray (blinding, explodes when in contact with water)
9	Radiant Energy
10	Sonic Blast (double damage underwater)
11	Slow Gas
12	Combination; Roll Twice

Table 16: Dragon Intelligence

1d4	Result
1	Animal
2	Low
3	Humanlike
4	Dragonlike (Genius)

Table 17: Communicating Ability

1d4	Result
1	Unable To Communicate; Animal Intelligence
2	Signs and Signals
3	Normal Speech
4	Telepathy

Table 18: Form of Undead Dragon

1d4	Result
1	Lifelike
2	Rotting Corpselike Form
3	Skeletal
4	Spectral (transparent, incorporeal)

by Keith Francis Strohm
illustrated by Andrew Goldhawk

Pawn of Tiamat, Children of Bahamut

OF THE MYRIAD CREATURES IN THE AD&D® GAME, NONE CAPTURES THE IMAGINATION LIKE DRAGONS. Winged beasts of incredible power, wise beings of ineffable wisdom, mythic monsters that strike fear into the hearts of heroes, dragons play many roles in a fantasy campaign. Yet even dragons have their luminaries known for their great power, extraordinary personality, or both.

The most notable of these unique dragons are noble Bahamut, the platinum dragon, and dreadful Tiamat, the chromatic dragon, demipowers locked in an eternal conflict. The multiverse, however, is an infinite battleground, and these demipowers command vast armies of creatures.

None, however, are more powerful or influential than the spawn of Tiamat and the children of Bahamut. These beings are descendants of the dragon gods—heirs of an ancient war for dominion of the multiverse. Each of these god-born creatures is a powerful and complex paragon of dragonkind.

In Your Campaign

A DM should not use these creatures as mere sword fodder—though such a combat-oriented approach could indeed yield hours of fun. These are powerful and intelligent dragons, and a clever DM can use these traits to guide the players' characters into specific adventures.

For example, denizens of a specific demiplane could approach the PCs for help in dealing with the Ethereal Dragon during its time of hunger. Rather than simply attacking the dragon until it leaves the demiplane alone, the PCs might parley with the creature, perhaps exploring some of the nearby demiplanes (sparking a series of linked adventures) to find a less populous area on which An-Ur can dine.

Perhaps the PCs meet one of the good dragons in its *polymorphed* human or demihuman form. The disguised dragon might enlist the PCs' aid in stopping the dark plans of the Undead Dragon. In fact, having the PCs function as pawns to the grand designs of two or more god-spawned dragons is a sure way to mix intrigue and combat into a campaign.

A Note on Draconic Spellcasting

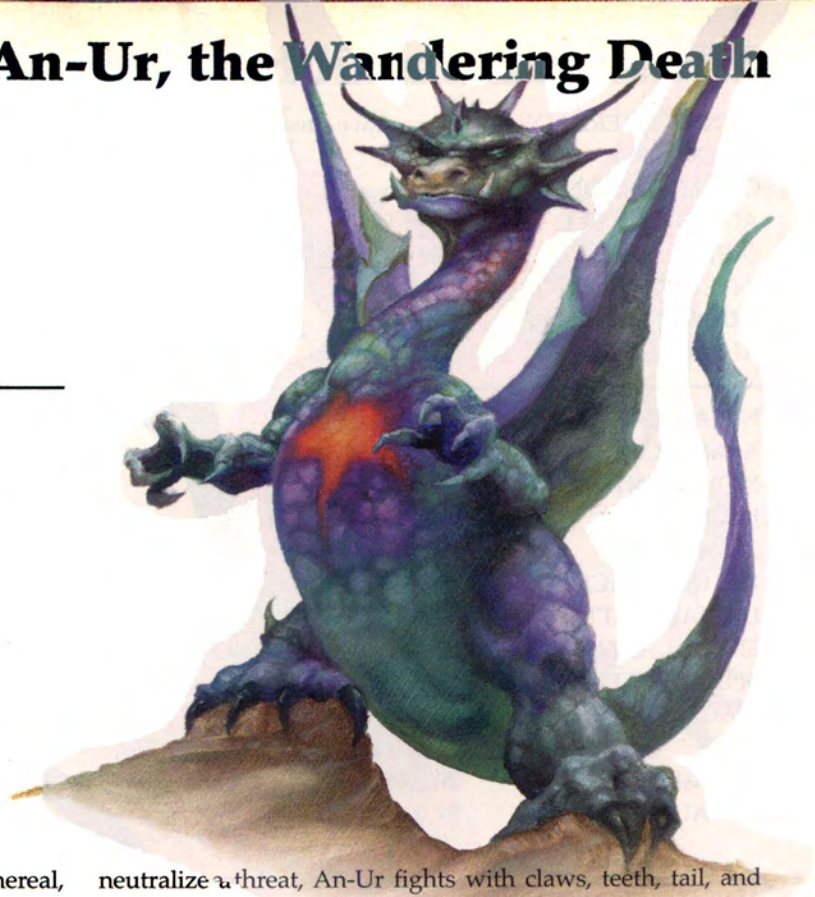
Since these unique dragons do not cast spells in the same manner as traditional Priests (i.e., they do not pray to specific deities), they are not subject to the same planar restrictions as Clerics who are removed from their deity's home plane of existence. However, DMs should feel free to modify draconic spellcasters in accordance with the dictates of their own campaign. For a deeper look at draconic spellcasting, refer to the *Cult of the Dragon* accessory.

Despite recently being domesticated, Keith still finds time to lose himself in an imaginary world.

An-Ur, the Wandering Death

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Ethereal Plane
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Ethereal matter
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17)
TREASURE:	None
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	–4 (–9)
MOVEMENT:	Special (9, fly 18 C, swim 6)
HIT DICE:	18 (140 hit points)
THAC0:	4
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 + special (special)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/2d4/3d12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Special
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	25%
SIZE:	G (140' long with a 100' tail)
MORALE:	19 (Fearless)
XP VALUE:	32,000



An-Ur wanders the limitless expanse of the Deep Ethereal, feeding on the prima matera—or concentrated ethereal mist—that makes up the Ethereal Plane. An-Ur appears as a ghostly shape on the rare occasions during which it semi-materializes on the Prime Material Plane, but it ripples with myriad colors when seen on the Deep Ethereal. Some sages have pointed to An-Ur's many hues as "proof" of its connection to the curtain of vaporous color, a shimmering wall of ethereal mist that serves as a doorway to specific areas on the Border Ethereal.

An-Ur speaks the Common tongue of both good and evil dragons. Furthermore, it possesses the innate ability to communicate with any creature native to the Ethereal Plane.

Combat: An-Ur avoids combat when it can. Though smaller and less physically imposing than other unique dragons, An-Ur commands fearsome combat powers.

When on the Deep Ethereal, An-Ur can summon an ether cyclone, a colossal, serpentine column of spinning ethereal matter, three times per day. The cyclone blows anyone within 300 feet, except An-Ur, through the curtain of vaporous color to a random section of the Border Ethereal. Affected creatures must make a successful saving throw vs. spell to remain on the Border. Failure indicates that the cyclone blows the creature to the nearest plane adjoining the Border Ethereal.

When fighting on the Border Ethereal or the Prime Material Plane (as a semi-material creature), An-Ur spews forth a stream of ethereal mist 10 feet wide and 60 feet long. Any creature caught within the path of this mist must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or find itself transported to a random section of the Deep Ethereal.

Only enchanted weapons of +3 or greater can damage An-Ur while it is in its semi-material form. The physical attributes for the semi-materialized Ethereal Dragon appear in parentheses in the statistics given above.

If its breath weapon or cyclone summoning power fail to neutralize a threat, An-Ur fights with claws, teeth, tail, and spells. (It can use both Wizard and Priest spells at the 10th level of ability.) An-Ur is always interested in negotiation rather than combat, and any honest attempt to end a battle (whose outcome is unknown) through peaceful resolution usually succeeds. It possesses genius-level intelligence and typical dragon instincts, so negotiating parties might need to make difficult concessions. An-Ur rarely keeps its word, and adventurers who successfully parley with this dragon often find themselves under attack again after it has regained its strength.

Habitat/Society: An-Ur lives a solitary existence on the Ethereal Plane, navigating the Waveless Sea on its own implacable course. Some sages speculate that it floats through the plane and acts as an ecological regulator, feeding off of the energy that bleeds into the Ethereal from the Inner Planes and maintaining some form of equilibrium.

Since it sometimes discovers or coerces items and treasure from individuals unfortunate enough to raise its ire, An-Ur must have a lair hidden in the Deep Ethereal, but no one has discovered it.

An-Ur is the oldest of Tiamat's children. Legends say that it sprang into being from Tiamat's first breath. Despite existing for hundreds of centuries, An-Ur has steadfastly ignored the ongoing struggle between the courts of Tiamat and Bahamut.

Ecology: An-Ur feeds off of the swirling ethereal particles that compose the Ethereal Plane, culling its food like a whale. Once every three hundred years or so, this creature's hunger flares, and it must consume vast amounts of prima matera. It is the time of An-Ur's Hungering that the creatures of the Ethereal Plane fear the most, as it scours the Deep Ethereal, devouring whole demiplanes. Once it finds an appetizing demiplane, An-Ur causes it to break apart using an innate ability similar to the *demiplane decay** Priest spell.

* For information on *demiplane decay*, prima matera, ether cyclones, and other conditions of the Ethereal Plane, see *A Guide to the Ethereal Plane*.

Dhrakoth the Corrupter

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Mass grave sites/ancient tombs
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Life energy
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (16)
TREASURE:	B, H, S, T
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	–6
MOVEMENT:	9, fly 6 (D)
HIT DICE:	20 (160 hit points)
THAC0:	1
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8/1d8/4d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Special
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	55%
SIZE:	G (100' long with a 30' tail)
MORALE:	20 (Fearless)
XP VALUE:	37,000

Cold, manipulative, and utterly evil, Dhrakoth represents the pinnacle of undeath. Dhrakoth resembles a black dragon with scarred, oozing, membranous wings. The creature's empty eye sockets pulse with sickening green light.

Dhrakoth speaks the draconic tongue common to all evil dragons. In addition, it can communicate with any creature with a connection to the Negative Energy Plane.

Combat: Dhrakoth eschews personal combat, preferring to command its legions of undead followers against any threat. If forced to melee, it uses its breath weapons before clawing and biting its way to victory. The creature's first breath weapon, a blast of pure decay, causes 10d8 points of damage to any creature caught within its blast radius (a cone 5 feet wide at its point of origin, 45 feet long, and 15 feet wide at its base). This excoriating stream painfully corrupts any living tissue, permanently reducing a character's Charisma score by 1d4 as skin, hair, and other matter decay beneath the blast. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces the damage by half, but even those who save still suffer the Charisma loss. A *regeneration* spell restores 1d2 points of Charisma, but only one such spell can benefit victims of the breath weapon.

When sorely pressed, Dhrakoth releases a stream of negative energy 10 feet wide and 35 feet long. Anyone who is caught within the stream must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or lose two life energy levels. Dhrakoth can use this breath weapon only once per day. Those protected by the Priest spell *negative plane protection* gain an additional saving throw vs. death magic to avoid the effects if they fail the original save. However, Dhrakoth does not suffer any damage from the blast of positive energy summoned by the spell. In addition, the dragon can attempt *undead control* on any undead creatures within 180 yards, at will. The targeted undead creatures' saving throws against this ability suffer a –3 penalty.

Due to its connection with the Negative Energy Plane, Dhrakoth is immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, cold (magical or otherwise), electricity, *hold*, *death spells*, and *symbols*. Weapons of less than +2 enchantment do not affect this creature. Dhrakoth cannot be turned.

Habitat/Society: Dhrakoth makes its home in ancient underground tombs, slowly exerting its evil influence over the rotting corpses buried within. In fact, Dhrakoth can *animate dead* as often as it wishes, limiting the size of its undead army to the availability of corpses.

Born in the heart of the Negative Energy Plane, Dhrakoth's essence was fused with a corporeal dragon through Tiamat's dark magic. The foul creature once served Tiamat unswervingly. As Dhrakoth's power grew, however, it began to seduce several of Tiamat's key generals. This small but powerful cadre seceded from Tiamat's court and began a centuries-long campaign to annihilate every living creature in the multiverse.

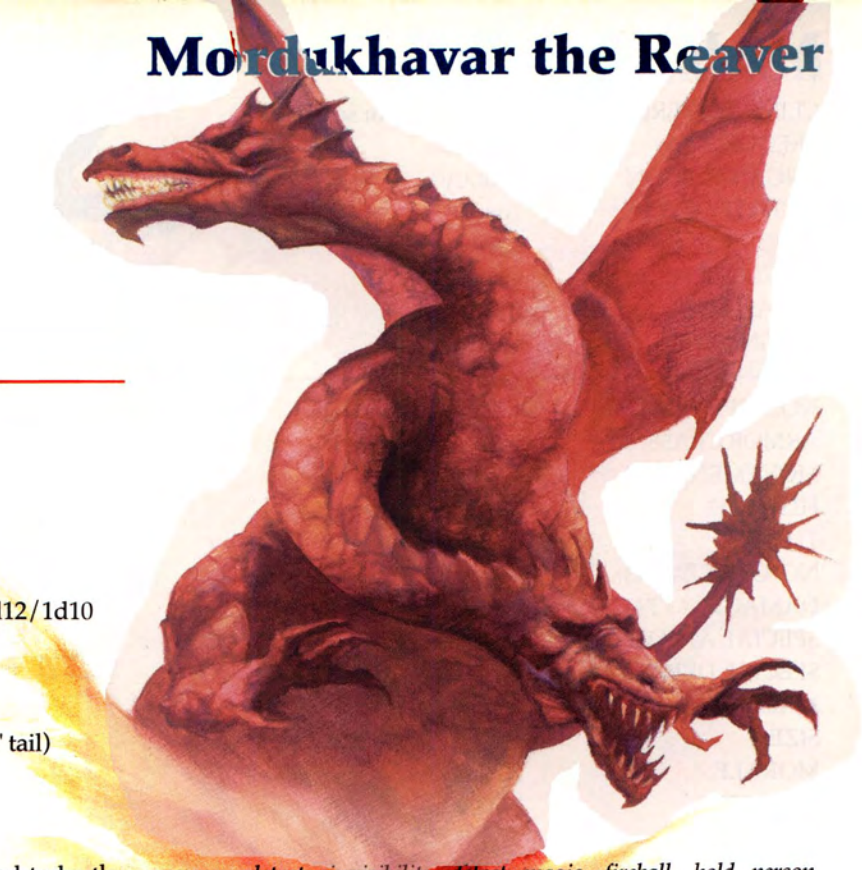
Although still fiercely independent, Dhrakoth has recently sealed a pact with the court of Tiamat. Thus, the creature bides its time, building its dark forces until Tiamat is ready to begin her conquest of the multiverse. Though a potentially unstoppable pair, these two dragons hold no love for each other. Tiamat knows that Dhrakoth's ultimate goal is the destruction of all life—including her own—and has set several of her servants to watch this necromantic beast for treachery. Dhrakoth, for its part, feels that Tiamat's resolve is weak, and it plots to overthrow her and assume her role as the ruler of all evil dragons.

Ecology: As an undead creature, Dhrakoth does not require physical sustenance. Rather, the beast feeds on the life energy of its victims. As a result, any creature slain by this undead monster cannot be *raised* from the dead, *resurrected*, or *wished* back to life. In addition, the spirits of these unfortunates cannot travel to the plane of their alignment upon death; they are irrevocably destroyed.

Mordukhavar the Reaver

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any (Baator)
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Scavenger
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (18)
TREASURE:	G, W
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	–7
MOVEMENT:	12, fly 24 (C)
HIT DICE:	24 (190 hit points)
THAC0:	1
NO. OF ATTACKS:	6 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6/1d6/2d8/2d8/3d12/1d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Special
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	65%
SIZE:	G (170' long with a 100' tail)
MORALE:	20 (Fearless)
XP VALUE:	46,000



Sages speak of Mordukhavar in whispers. Reputed to be the offspring of Tiamat and one of the Dark Eight, the two-headed Mordukhavar is one of the most powerful abominations ever to climb from the pits of Baator. The creature's wings are powerful, batlike appendages with wicked claws, and its thick tail ends in a cruel barb.

Combat: Mordukhavar prefers close combat, as it enjoys rending flesh and shattering bone. Like its pit fiend cousins, Mordukhavar can attack six times per round, dividing its attacks between six different opponents. Mordukhavar attacks with its scaly wings (1–6 points of damage), its razor-sharp claws (2–16 points of damage), its terrible bite (3–36 points of damage), and its wyvernlike tail (1–10 points of damage). Those struck by its physical attacks must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or fall into a coma in 1d4 rounds. (*Slow poison* retards the onset of the coma by another 2d6 rounds, and *neutralize poison* nullifies the effect entirely.)

Mordukhavar has two powerful breath weapons, each from one of its heads. The first, from the right head, is a devastating gout of hellfire 5 feet wide and 55 feet long, and it causes 22d10 points of damage to creatures caught within the area of effect. The second, from the left head, is a spray of corrosive acid 5 feet wide at its point of origin, 45 feet long, and 15 feet wide at its base; it causes 20d8 points of damage and forces all items to make appropriate saving throws. Victims of either breath weapon can make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon to reduce damage by half. Failure against the corrosive spray indicates that the acid completely destroys the items in question. Damage inflicted to either head counts only against Mordukhavar's total hit points, but neutralizing one or both heads by magic or other means reduces the number of breath weapon attacks or eliminates the dragon's breath weapons entirely.

Mordukhavar can also employ the following spell-like abilities, once per round at will: *advanced illusion*, *animate dead*, *charm person*, *detect invisibility*, *detect magic*, *fireball*, *hold person*, *improved invisibility*, *infravision*, *know alignment*, *polymorph self*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, *suggestion*, *symbol (pain)*, *teleport without error*, and *wall of fire*. It can also wield Wizard and Priest spells at the 14th level of ability. Once per day, the creature can *polymorph* itself into the form of a 30'-tall pit fiend.

Mordukhavar is immune to poison, acid, and fire (both magical and nonmagical), and it suffers half damage from cold-based and gaseous attacks. Only weapons of +3 or greater enchantment can damage this creature, and it regenerates 3 hit points per round. Finally, Mordukhavar can *gate* in six lesser baatezu or three greater baatezu. As a last resort, it has a 65% chance to summon an avatar of Tiamat to aid it in battle.

Habitat/Society: Seemingly ignored by the Lords of the Nine and distrusted by almost all of the Dark Eight, Mordukhavar moves between the Nine Layers of Baator, gathering information and making deals on behalf of Tiamat. Recently, Mordukhavar received command of a large detachment of baatezu with orders to fight in the Blood War. If this is true, then Tiamat has certainly entered the conflict between Law and Chaos—but for what purpose?

Mordukhavar's recent commission is sure to unsettle members of the Dark Eight. A few successes on the battlefield, and it could find itself the newest member of the ruling Pit Fiends of Baator—an incident sure to raise Tiamat's influence in Hell.

Ecology: Mordukhavar clearly holds some close connection with Tiamat. If the creature is really the offspring of the Chromatic Dragon and one of the Eight, then the baatezu now possess one of the most powerful weapons in the Blood War.

Occasionally, Mordukhavar answers the summons of an evil Wyrm or Great Wyrm as a representative of Tiamat. Such visitations to the Prime Material Plane are rare, but they usually involve the long-term plans of the Chromatic Dragon.

Medrinia

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Deep oceans or seas
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17)
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Good
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	–7
MOVEMENT:	12, swim 36
HIT DICE:	22 (176 hit points)
THAC0:	1
NO. OF ATTACKS:	4 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/2d4/3d6/6d12
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Special
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	45%
SIZE:	G (120' long with a 30' tail)
MORALE:	20 (Fearless)
XP VALUE:	36,000

Medrinia is the representative of Bahamut to all aquatic dragons. She rules from her undersea palace—a magnificent structure made from coral, shells, and pearl—and protects Good-aligned aquatic creatures. Medrinia is a sleek dragon with deep blue-green scales and sturdy wings. The membrane stretching between the cartilage in her wings is thick, allowing her to use them as powerful fins. Her wide tail also ends in a crescent-shaped fluke. Medrinia can telepathically communicate with any living thing. She also speaks the language of any mundane aquatic creature, as well as the tongues of the good dragons, sea elves, locathah, mermen, and tritons.

Combat: Though generally peaceful, Medrinia is quick to use her powers when one of her subjects is threatened. In combat, she can claw for 2d4 points of damage. She often bashes opponents with her powerful tail, causing 3d6 points of damage and stunning victims for 1d4 rounds. Finally, Medrinia has a powerful bite attack that inflicts 6d12 points of damage.

Medrinia can breathe a cone of pure force 10 feet wide at its origin, 50 feet long, and 20 feet wide at its base. This breath weapon causes a funnel of water to pummel anyone within its area of effect, inflicting 15d10 points of damage. The breath weapon can be employed only when Medrinia and the target are both underwater, and a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces the damage by half.

Medrinia also uses a powerful breach attack against sailing vessels. Sinking as deep as necessary, she arrows toward the surface at top speed, breaking the surface and launching herself completely out of the water. Once airborne, Medrinia tucks in her wings, rolls on her side, and smashes the offending vessel. This attack destroys ships under 60 feet long and has a 35% chance to sink ships over 60 feet. If using the naval combat rules found in *Of Ships & the Sea*, this breaching attack causes 18d12 points of both crippling and hull damage. All Seaworthiness checks made as a result of this attack suffer a –2 penalty.

Medrinia can use the following spell-like abilities at the 15th level of ability, once per round: *water breathing* (Priest), *part water, detect invisibility, Samprey's sensible sea sphere*, pressure resistance*, polymorph self, polymorph other, conjure elemental* (water), *withstand water*, enhance water creature** (Priest), *shellskin**, and *rapture of the deep**. She can summon 1d4 sea wyrms and 1d2 dragon turtles every turn. These creatures arrive within 3 rounds of the summoning.

Habitat/Society: According to legend, Medrinia formed from a tear shed by Bahamut after the platinum dragon witnessed the carnage of the first battle between the draconic forces of good and those of the Chromatic Dragon. When Medrinia acts as Bahamut's representative, there is a 20% chance that she is accompanied by another emissary of Bahamut or even one of Bahamut's avatars.

Medrinia patrols the breadth and depth of the oceans in search of evil. She oversees a vast network of allied creatures—from dolphins and sea-horses to other aquatic dragons—that provides aid to its members in times of need.

Medrinia demonstrates compassion for Good-aligned surface dwellers who find themselves threatened by the sea. Some even say that Medrinia sends out patrols of dolphins to rescue drowning sailors.

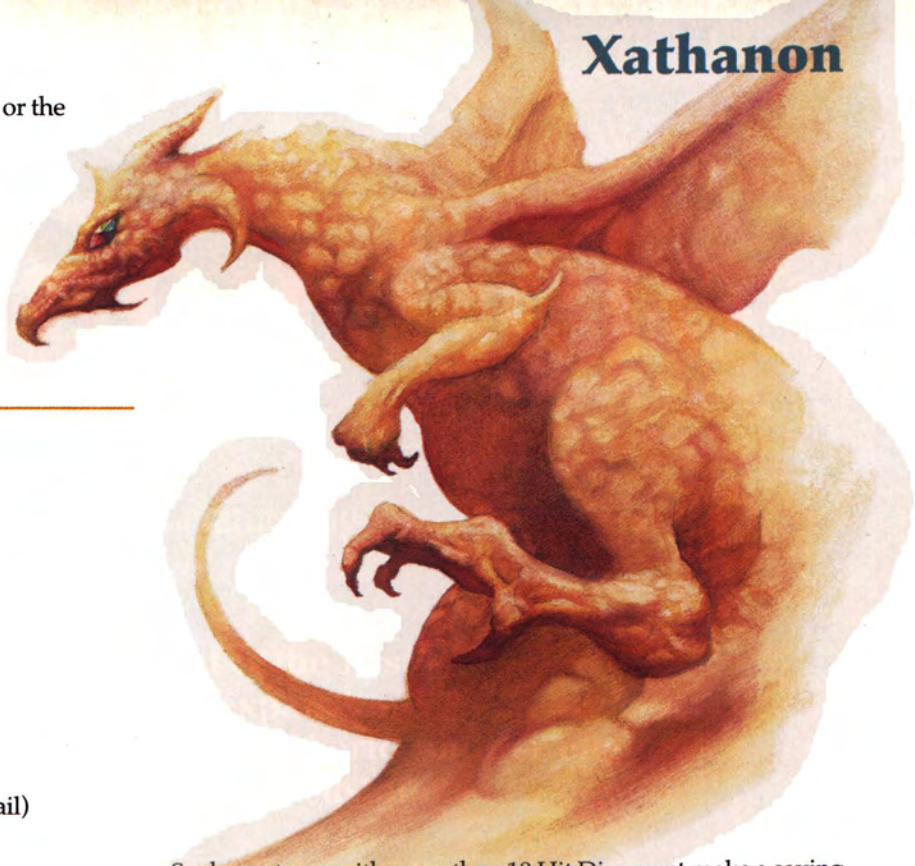
Medrinia's palace, Sea Reach, serves as a haven for all Good-aligned sea-creatures in time of war.

Ecology: Medrinia feeds upon vast amounts of fish and other simple aquatic creatures. Although she often fights other evil and powerful aquatic creatures—such as deepspawn, weresharks, morkoth, and especially sahuagin—Medrinia refuses to consume these evil creatures.

*Indicates a spell described in *Of Ships & the Sea*.

Xathanon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Positive Energy Plane or the Prime Material Plane
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (18)
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Good
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	–10 (–6)
MOVEMENT:	(Infinite) 12, fly 24 (C)
HIT DICE:	18 (154 hit points)
THAC0:	1
NO. OF ATTACKS:	(1) 4 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	(7d10 + special) 3d4/3d4/5d6/3d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Special
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	90%
SIZE:	G (165' long with 80' tail)
MORALE:	20 (Fearless)
XP VALUE:	38,000



Xathanon has no physical form; it is composed entirely of positive energy. In fact, some say this beast isn't a dragon but rather the physical embodiment of the Positive Energy Plane. When on the Prime, Xathanon resembles a burst of golden energy in the shape of a dragon. Its eyes appear as multicolored, glowing "crystals." On the Positive Energy plane, Xathanon is a formless swirl of positive energy. This dragon can communicate with any sentient object or being via telepathy.

Combat: Xathanon detests evil and often acts outside the boundaries of law, responding swiftly to any perceived threat. In combat, Xathanon is a force of nature. On its native plane (the parenthetical statistics represent the creature's abilities on the Positive Energy Plane), it moves as swiftly as pure energy. Xathanon can travel to any point on the Positive Energy Plane instantaneously, where it always strikes first in combat. On the Positive Plane, this creature has one mode of attack: a blast of pure positive energy. Any creature struck by such a blast suffers 6d10 points of damage. In addition, the creature must make a saving throw vs. death magic or explode into millions of particles of positive energy.

On the Prime, Xathanon uses traditional draconic melee attacks. Its deadly "claws" inflict 3d4 points of damage each, and its razor sharp "teeth" inflict 5d6 points of damage. Xathanon can also strike opponents with its tail for 3d8 points of damage. All undead creatures—and beings from the Negative Energy Plane—suffer triple damage from these attacks.

While on the Prime Material Plane, Xathanon can breathe a stream of pure positive energy 45 feet long and 10 feet wide. This breath weapon acts as a *resurrection*, *heal*, and *restoration* spell on Good-aligned creatures. In addition, the energy destroys (as the clerical turning effect of the same name) any undead or negative energy being of fewer than 10 Hit Dice. Such creatures with more than 10 Hit Dice must make a saving throw vs. death magic (with a –2 penalty) to survive. Creatures that save still suffer 8d8 points of damage.

Finally, Xathanon can *plane shift* at will.

Habitat/Society: Formed by Bahamut from the essence of the Positive Plane, Xathanon serves Draco Paladin unswervingly. However, Xathanon rarely attends the Draconic Court on Mount Celestia, preferring the pulsing depths of the Positive Material Plane. Despite its seeming isolation, Xathanon keeps a close watch over the events unfolding in the multiverse. This dragon is 100% likely to answer a summons from Bahamut or one of Bahamut's children.

Xathanon follows the exploits of certain heroes, and it might (15% chance) come to the aid of one of its "chosen." When on the Prime Material Plane, Xathanon can fuse its essence to the corporeal form of a Good-aligned character. Filled with the power of the Positive Material Plane, the hero transforms into a gold dragon, receiving all of the benefits and powers (including AC, hit points, physical attacks, innate abilities, etc.) of a Great Wyrm of that species. Note that heroes retain their personalities during the transformation, and they need not make a System Shock roll. The change lasts one hour for every level of the hero. Afterward, Xathanon must immediately return to the Positive Energy Plane to recuperate for no fewer than 10 hours.

Xathanon holds a special hatred of Dhrakoth. The two have never met in combat, and some say that, if such a battle were to occur, the very fabric of the multiverse might tear under the opposing forces of positive and negative energy.

Ecology: As a creature composed of pure energy, Xathanon does not require physical sustenance. It is not known whether this dragon must return to the Positive Energy Plane on a regular basis—except after infusing mortal heroes with its essence.

Vanathor, the Golden Harpist

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Mount Celestia or the Prime Material Plane
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (18)
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful Good

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	–6
MOVEMENT:	12, Fly 24 (C)
HIT DICE:	20 (160 hit points)
THAC0:	1
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3d4/3d4/5d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Special
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	75%
SIZE:	G (145' long with a 45' tail)
MORALE:	20 (Fearless)
XP VALUE:	41,000

Regal Vanathor embodies everything that is pure and good in dragonkind. This dragon serves as Bahamut's advisor and Bard in the demipower's palace on Mount Celestia. Vanathor is a master of all things musical.

Vanathor appears as a powerful and charismatic gold dragon with a swirl of rainbow colors across its scaled chest. This dragon speaks the Common tongue as well as the language of Good-aligned dragons. In addition, it can communicate with any creature through song.

Combat: Like Bahamut, Vanathor reveres all life and is reluctant to kill. However, the creature possesses powerful claws that inflict 3d4 points of damage and a ferocious bite that causes 5d6 points of damage.

Instead of using a traditional breath weapon, Vanathor utilizes the power of its six-octave voice to help those in need and defeat particularly powerful opponents. The effects of each octave are as follows:

1st Octave: This subsonic rumble shatters all metal weapons and armor within a 90' radius area. Magical weapons and armor receive an item saving throw vs. disintegration to resist the effect.

2nd Octave: This basso profundo sound disrupts magic within a 60' radius. All spells and spell-like effects, regardless of their duration, are dispelled. (Note that this includes permanent spells.) Magical items—such as rings, rods, staves, and wands—and magical weapons and armor cease to function for 2d4 turns.

3rd Octave: This deep octave *charms* every creature within a 90' radius (normal saving throws apply).

4th Octave: This range of notes *heals* (as per the spell) all creatures within a 60' radius.

5th Octave: These bugle-like notes cause anyone within a 60' radius to *plane shift* to a destination of Vanathor's choosing.

6th Octave: These piercing notes cause 10d12 points of damage to any creature within a 60' radius (no saving throw).

Vanathor's deep, melodious speaking voice, coupled with the dragon's mastery of storytelling and oration, *enthralls* (as the spell) anyone listening to it for more than one round. It also uses spells as a 19th-level Wizard and can *polymorph self* at will.

This creature is immune to all *silence* spells and spells that dampen or otherwise affect sound. In addition, it is immune to weapons of less than +2 enchantment.

Habitat/Society: As one of Bahamut's most trusted and powerful advisors, Vanathor wields a great deal of influence over draconic affairs in Mount Celestia. When not advising Draco Paladin, Vanathor spends a good deal of its time serving as Bard for the Draconic Court at Bahamut's palace. It is on good terms with all of the powers of Music—especially Corellon Larethian—and it often travels to share music and information.

Vanathor watches over Bards and other musicians who travel on the Prime Material Plane. Occasionally, Vanathor travels to the Prime and *polymorphs* itself into the form of a handsome half-elven Bard. In this form, it offers advice, shares information, and otherwise assists those in need. As a half elf, Vanathor carries an elaborate ash wood harp that duplicates its own sonic abilities and wields a *broadsword +3, flame tongue.* Good-aligned Bards of 15th-level or higher have a 15% chance to summon Vanathor if they mention its name in a song.

Unlike the other children of Bahamut, who were either created by Draco Paladin or spawned by mortal dragons, Vanathor simply appeared as an expected guest at Bahamut's Court and offered its service. Some sages say that this creature is actually a dead power from an ancient pantheon, given new life by Bahamut's magic.

Ecology: Vanathor hunts and eats as a normal dragon. However, other dragons often bring it meals as a sign of reverence.

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CAVEDOG

DRAGON NAMES

by Owen K.C. Stephens

*"Dragons . . . are known and feared for their size, physical prowess, and magical abilities. The oldest dragons are among the most powerful creatures in the world."—*MONSTROUS MANUAL™ *book*

Names are an important part of any AD&D® setting. They can make cultures seem mysterious, warriors sound heroic, and villains remain memorable. Well-crafted and appropriate names are powerful tools for DMs and players alike. Although it can be difficult and time consuming for a DM to create lists of non-human names appropriate to particular humanoid characters and cultures, there are frequently resources available to help with these tasks. Dwarven names might be taken from Norse myth, and numerous elven names are found in modern fantasy literature.

Less common fantasy races can be far more difficult to find names for. This is particularly true for nonhumanoid races, who appear less frequently as major characters in fiction. And while few DMs need names for a pair of owlbears who attack the party, some monsters need good names as much as the PCs do. Most famous of such monsters are the mighty dragons, from which the AD&D game takes part of its name. Dragons can be found as master villains, helpful advisors, cunning rivals, or even romantic interests for characters. For any of these roles, dragons need interesting, consistent, and memorable names to bring their personalities and roles to life.

The dragon name generator on page 56 is designed to assist with this daunting task. No list of name fragments could ever include all the possible names and variations found among the different dragon sub-races, but this generator can serve as a starting point and easy reference for creating draconic names.

Table 1

1d20	Result
1	Roll once on Table 2.
2–12	Roll twice on Table 2.
13–18	Roll three times on Table 2.
19–20	Roll twice on Table 2 for a first name and twice for a second name.

How It Works

Each draconic name consists of one or more name fragments (from *Table 2*). Definitions have been included in this table to help determine what a name means once it has been generated. A dragon may also have several common monikers it has earned or chosen, and *Table 2* can also help develop these. Dragons are complex and ancient creatures, and it would not be unusual for one to have a dozen or more names and

... it would not be unusual for one to have a dozen or more names and titles.

titles it uses in different circumstances.

You may randomly generate a draconic name by rolling on *Table 1*. If you prefer, it is also possible to pick a set of definitions you like and assemble a name from the name fragments listed with each definition. If trying to name a wise silver dragon who lives on a mountain, you might decide that his name means Bright Scholar. Looking at the definitions in *Table 2*, you end up with Alaerthauntyr (or Alaeauntyr, Alaeuntryr, or Alaerthuntryr).

It is important to remember what impression you want the dragon to make when assembling its name. As with any random generator, not every combination will sound good, and some names might not be appropriate for a particular creature. If you want to portray a dragon as swift and graceful, you won't want a name that sounds lumbering and clumsy.

If you don't like a particular combination, try some of the alternate spellings listed, or add (or remove) an ae, ar, i, ix, u, g, r, s, t, or th. Sometimes only a minor change to a name is called for, and sometimes a whole new name may be more appropriate for the dragon. If you can't make a particular name work, try one with a similar meaning. If you didn't like Alaerthauntyr, try a name that means "Ancient Sage," instead.

Draconic names are almost always self-referential. Name fragments that are defined as a category (like Ethar, which means "any breath weapon") almost always refer to the dragon itself. Thus in a blue dragon's name Ethar is likely to mean "lightning breath," but for a gold dragon Ethar will mean "fire breath" or "breath of gas." Name fragments with more general definitions (such as Dalagh, meaning "any weapon") likely refer to some favored object of that dragon. Of course, there are always exceptions to these rules. A draconic name can also have "Dragon of" or "Wyrm" added to it. The simple name Anthar could mean "The Dragon of the Swamp" or "Dire Wyrm."

If you have randomly generated a name and don't like its definition, try altering the order of the words. It is also possible to use the definition as just a starting place for a name's meaning. Often the definitions can be combined in a poetic way for better results. In the case of a name with three or more fragments, try dropping one or more of the definitions. Thus Feliymhoon could mean "Dragon of the Evil Shrine to Storms," "Stern Raider of Evil," "Storm of Pain," or just "The Adamant Wyrm."

Draconic nicknames or common language monikers can be chosen or rolled up in the same way. You can randomly roll on *Table 1* for a few definitions to put together, or you can use definitions you like as a starting point. If you have decided to name the scholarly silver dragon Alaerthauntryr, you might decide to roll up a few random titles for him, or just decide that bards refer to him as "Father Sky," and the nearby orcs call him "The Slumbering Terror." The older a dragon is, the more monikers and titles it is likely to have.

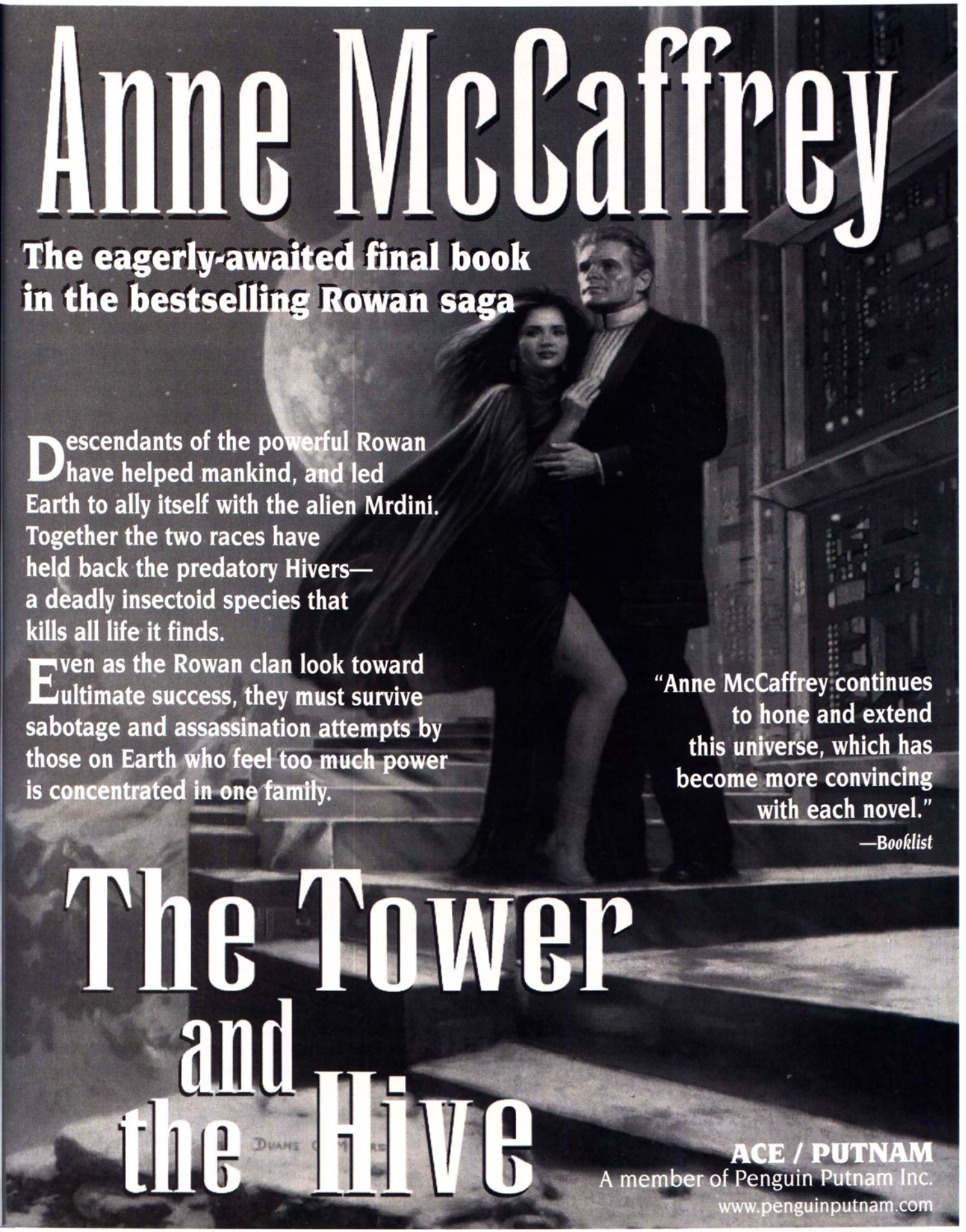
Don't worry about two names sharing the same meaning or having two definitions for one name. Although draconic names have all descended from the same root language, the different sub-races have slightly different definitions and pronunciations for the same names. Besides, who's going to argue if an ancient red dragon decides to change the definition of its name?

Dragons sometimes borrow names or name fragments from other languages. It would be possible for a dragon to use all or part of a human's name in its own, for no other reason than liking the sound of it. You may want to experiment with mixing draconic and dwarven or elven names. You could even mix in name fragments from other name generators (such as the elven name generator article from *DRAGON Magazine* #251).

Owen Stephens is a veteran DM who lives in Norman, Oklahoma. Although there weren't many dragons in Oklahoma to interview for this article, Owen says it's amazing who you can talk to on the Internet if you know where to look. His article on otyugh names is proving harder to research.

Table 2

1d100	Name	Meaning
1	Aeros/Vaeros	Breath; Fire; Fiery; Life
2	Agha/Agham	Any color or metal
3	Agyrt/Gyrtu	Ancient; Elder; First; Old
4	Akkan/Ikkan	Assassin; Bane; Murderous; Savage
5	Alae/Alaerth	Agile; Bright; Quick; Lightning
6	Aly/Alymm	Charm; Enchanter; Wand
7	Andra/Andre	Epic; Great; Royal; Vast
8	Andusk	Blinding; Light; South; Sun
9	Angkar	Ally; Dwarf; Elf; Enemy
10	Anthar	Dire; Dismal; Swamp; Trap
11	Aradace	High; Mighty; Powerful; Ruler
12	Arauth/Tharur	Defense; Maze; Trap; Trickster
13	Ardu/Arydun	Healing; Innocent; Kind; Peaceful
14	Arveia/Veiar	Betrayal; False; Lying; Traitor
15	Aryz/Aryxon	Airy; Dancing; Graceful; Sweet
16	Atar/Atrux	Fang; Feed; Gnaw; Tooth
17	Auntyr/Untryr	Learned; Knowledge; Scholar; Wise
18	Aurak/Uraka	Hunter; Stalk; Tail; Tracking
19	Auth/Autha	Black; Blind; Darkness; Void
20	Bahor/Bahr	Accursed; Blight; Curse; Toxin
21	Bane	Might; Powerful; Ring; Rune
22	Bala/Ballax	Blighted; Corrupt; Plague; Scourge
23	Calaun	Assault; Judge; Smite; Vengeance
24	Ciym/Iym	Adamant; Shrine; Statue; Stern
25	Claug/Clugh	Forest; Garden; Green; Growing
26	Daerev/Deregh	Egg; Hatchling; New; Young
27	Dalagh/Dalah	Any weapon
28	Darrh/Darrath	Dread; Fearful; Panic; Terror
29	Durg/Daurgo	Dracolich; Foul; Rotting; Undead
30	Deszeld	Ambitious; Dragon; Fierce; Lord/Lady
31	Eir/Majeir	Fortress; Grand; Huge; Mountain
32	Elden/Irden	Hermit; Quest; Sage; Search
33	Ethar/Thargar	Any breath weapon
34	Endeem	Claw; Sharp; Swift; Talon
35	Endor	Brother/Sister; Companion; Twin
36	Eroese/Reoz	Historic; Legend(ary); Mythic
37	Fel/Irfel	Evil; Malice; Misfortune; Pain
38	Gahl/Galad	Dying; End; Night; Sunset
39	Gaul/Gaulir	Glory; Honorable; Loyal; Oath
40	Golos/Gos	Air; Flying; Wind; Wing/Winged
41	Guth/Guthi	Chameleon; Disguised; Shifting; Unknown
42	Harn/Hoon	Rage; Raid; Raider; Storm
43	Ingeir	Devoted; Heart; Love; Soul
44	Ix/Ixu	Courageous; Iron; Resolute; Will
45	Iyliam/Riylm	Bone; Corpse; Entombed; Lost
46	Jalan	Abundant; Bounty; Many; Treasure
47	Jhar/Ujhar	Charm; Mystic; Spell; Wizard
48	Kerin/Kerrar	Humanoid; Lesser; Servant; Weak
49	Klauth	Rumble; Snarl; Thunder; Warning
50	Lham/Ulham	Coast; Endless; Sea; Vast; West
51	Lothtor	Breeder; Creator; Father/Mother; Progenitor
52	Mal/Malae	Lair; Mysterious; Unknown; Vault
53	Marun/Marux	Lightning; Mighty; Powerful; Wyrm
54	Maugh	Burning; Desire; Flame; Obsession
55	Mere	Beast; Fiend; Savage; Primal
56	Miir/Miirym	Alert; Cautious; Guardian; Sentinel
57	Morn/Mornaug	Divine; God; Omniscient; Priest
58	Murh	Crypt; Sleep; Slumbering; Still
59	Nabal	Fate; Fortune; Lucky
60	Nym/Nyth	Eyes; Scrying; Sight; Watching
61	Nur/Unur	Concealed; Deceiver; Masked; Trick
62	Oloth/Lotho	Bardic; Minstrel; Singing; Song
63	Ontor/Ontrix	Arcane; Enchanted; Mage; Magic
64	Osk	Greed; Horde; Lust; Thought
65	Othim	Dark, Dusky; Shadow; Shadowy
66	Palar/Palax	Defending; Guardian; Protector; Shield
67	Quirin/Quitu	Celestial; Eternal; Glittering; Star
68	Raali/Raul	Silent; Stealthy; Thief; Thieving
69	Ragoth	Heaven; High; Sky; Tall
70	Razylym	Armored; Hard; Steel; Strong
71	Rith/Rithux	Destruction; Doom; Ruin; Warrior
72	Ru/Rurr	Friend; Kin; Good; Morale
73	Rysear/Ryx	Fast; Lithe; Rain; Water
74	Saryn/Saryx	Any gem or stone
75	Ser/Seyr	Moon; Orb; Pearl; Silvery
76	Sygax/Zygax	Battle; Ruler; Victor; War
77	Skad/Skarr	Avid; Blood; Prey; Ravenous
78	Surp/Surr	Crazed; Nature; Wasteland; Wild
79	Thal/Thalu	Born in/of; History; Memory
80	Thanach/Tanarg	Chaos; Hatching; Freedom; Living
81	Thot/Thoth	Creeping; Larva; Worm; Writhe
82	Thrax/Uthrax	Giant; Growing; Impressive; Massive
83	Thriin/Thriina	Archer; Arrow; Harmful; Wound
84	Treori/Treoris	Dream; Illusion; Phantasmal; Sleep
85	Tostyn/Tosz	Anything of value
86	Traint/Tratain	Just; Pact; Right; Truth
87	Turac/Turace	Cold; Frozen; Ice; North
88	Ua/Ualin	Desolate; Destruction; Devourer; East
89	Umer/Umerus	Bridge; Future; Oracle; Path
90	Uryte	Forgotten; Keeper; Lost; Lore
91	Uxin/Xin	Hated; Hateful; Poison; Venomous
92	Vaer/Waer	Cloak; Hidden; Riddle; Secret
93	Vala/Valam	Noble; Queen/King; Worthy
94	Valos	Craft, Enchantment; Master/Mistress; Skill
95	Vinc/Vincix	Clay; Earth; Terrestrial; World
96	Voar/Voarex	Dead; Deadly; Death; Slayer
97	Vureem	Buried; Cave; Submerged; Underground
98	Waur/Wyr	Clever; Serpent; Sly
99	Zundae	Harlequin; Laughing; Mirthful; Roar
100	Zyreph	Engulfing; Flood; Overwhelm; Swallow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The eagerly-awaited final book in the bestselling Rowan saga
Descendants of the powerful Rowan have helped mankind, and led Earth to ally itself with the alien Mrdini. Together the two races have held back the predatory Hivers—a deadly insectoid species that kills all life it finds.
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Van Richten's Legacy

The Herbalist's Shop

by Cindi Rice and Steve Miller

illustrated by Thomas Gianni

FROM THE JOURNAL OF GENNIFER FOXGROVE-WEATHERMAY:

After months of waiting for Uncle Rudolph's return, we have decided to take a more active stance. I am starting this journal to keep a record of our progress. Laurie had been insisting for some time that we should read Uncle Rudolph's diary, and I finally acquiesced. We hoped to find clues about his location, and we found a reference to a hospital for the mentally distressed. If he went to such a place, it would certainly explain why no one has heard from him. We have written letters to doctors as far away as Nova Vaasa and presently await their replies.

In the meantime, we have resolved to conduct a more thorough search of Uncle Rudolph's residence. There are repeated references in his diary to notes and journals that we have not been able to find. We always knew there was a wealth of material that he didn't publish before retiring from public life. It now appears there was even more than we suspected. Perhaps more clues can be found among them.

Van Richten's House

FROM HIS AMAZING LIBRARY TO HIS WELL-STOCKED LABORATORY, Van Richten surrounded himself with the tools of his intellectual pursuits. The doctor had this building remodeled to accommodate his needs about ten years ago, though many of the changes are known only to him and the builders, who were sworn to secrecy.

Van Richten's shop is nestled in a quiet little intersection on the edge of Mordentshire, identifiable only by the small sign hung next to the door, which reads "Herbalist, Dr. Rudolph van Richten." Each of the doors and windows has a holy symbol etched in the wood over it, and the flower boxes in front of each of the windows (except for those of stained glass) hold well-tended garlic and wolfsbane plants.

Dr. Van Richten did not think it necessary to have a live-in servant, but he did have a neighbor woman come in once per day. The motherly Mrs. Polk continued tending to the place long after the doctor's disappearance, waiting until the Weathermay sisters had everything under control before ceasing her visits.

Herbalist Shop

A small bell above the entrance greets anyone who opens the door to this establishment with its gentle chime. Next to the door hangs a full-length mirror, in which Van Richten would watch anyone coming into his shop. The inside of this room boasts row upon row of small shelves filled with vials and jars of herbs. Everything from adder's tongue to woundwart can be found here. Poisons such as bryony, hemlock, hemp, mistletoe, monk's-hood (wolfsbane), mullein, and saffron are kept behind the counter. Like Van Richten, the twins take great care to whom they distribute these. Under this counter, the doctor also kept a small strongbox. Gennifer and Laurie have not located the key, so its contents remain untouched.

Sitting Room

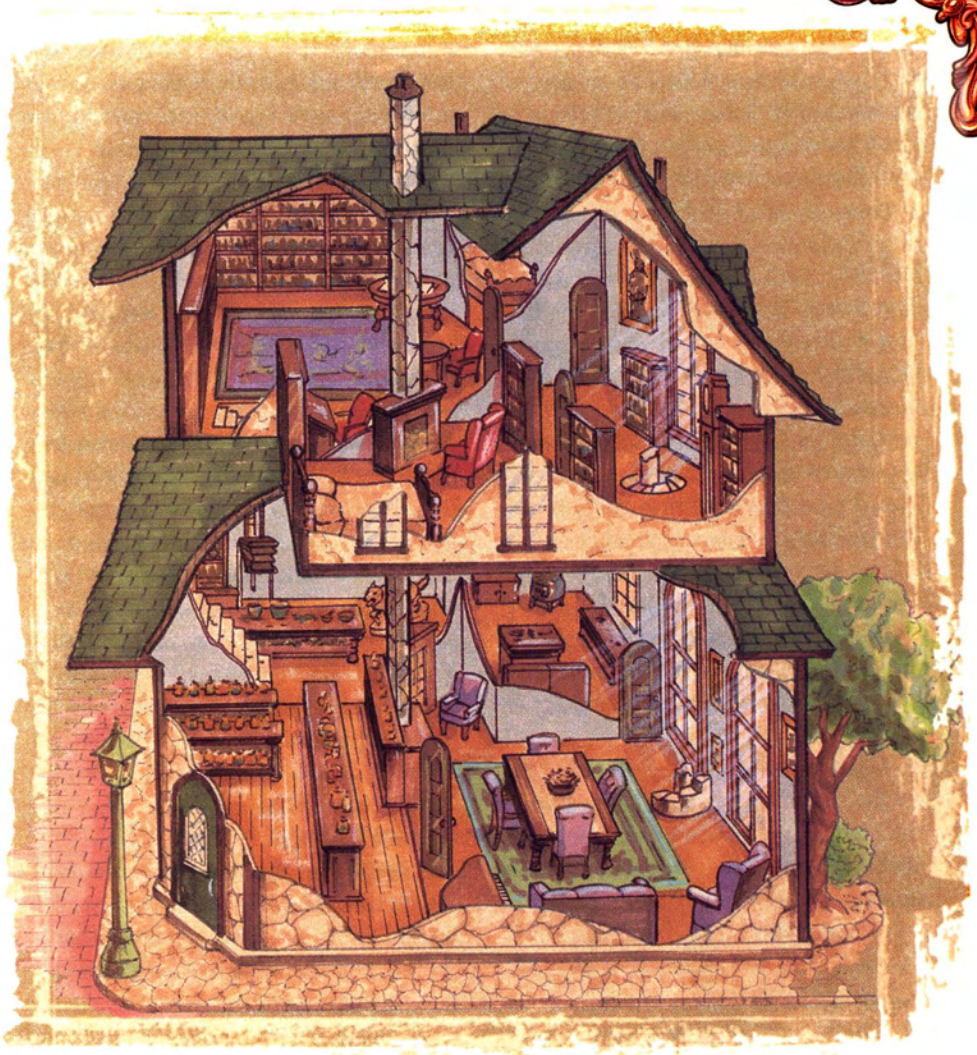
Customers rarely see this room, but the sisters prefer it to any other room in the house. This area dances with color in the morning as the rising sun shines through the two large stained-glass windows on either side of the iron staircase. Dr. Van Richten purchased these windows (as well as the one at the top of the stairs) from a small church of the Morning Lord, whose Gundarakite priests had been run out of town by angry Barovian villagers. The window in the southern wall offers a less spectacular view, leaving visitors to enjoy the fine Markovian leather of the couch below it.

In the corner of the room stands a sturdy, oak cabinet that holds the remainder of the Van Richten family china, which was brought from Rivalis. Though many of the plates and bowls have been patched together countless times, the glassware remains surprisingly intact. In addition, the bottom shelves hold bottles of the finest wines and liqueurs to be found in the Core.

To the left of the door sits a small stand containing several canes that the doctor happened across during his travels, including his favorite—a carved ivory cane with a particularly fiendish looking face on the ferrule. If the tongue is depressed a certain way, a small pronged metal spike shoots out of the end, remaining attached to the cane by a length of strong twine.

Another reason that the sisters spend so much time in this room is the harpsichord to the right of the door. Van Richten brought this beautiful instrument back from Richemulot, along with a stack of sheet music. Unfortunately, Dr. Van Richten was a scholar, not a musician, so the instrument went mostly unused. However, Gennifer has more than made up for that during her stay.

Several large bookshelves also occupy this room. Despite the spacious library upstairs, Van Richten ran out of room for his books, so he began moving some of them into other rooms of the house. Because he organized his tomes alphabetically, he simply moved out particular letters to make room in the library. Thus, these shelves contain all of his books by authors whose last names begin with the letters A and B.



Very few visitors ever see the rooms beyond Van Richten's storefront shop.

The most unusual thing about this room is the number of portraits hanging on the walls. Almost every bit of empty wall space is covered by a small, round painting of someone that Van Richten has lost due to his curse, with the notable exception of his son, Erasmus.

Kitchen

A dumbwaiter connects this room to the upstairs hallway. This allowed Mrs. Polk to send up hot water for the doctor's bath, which he took in his room. Since his disappearance, however, the sisters have moved the tub downstairs, leaving it in the laboratory when not in use.

Laboratory

This room remains largely unused since Van Richten's sudden disappearance. The primary workbench holds a cluttered collection of beakers and glass tubes. Directly over this hangs a large bellows, which is operated by a foot tread, allowing the doctor to pump out any smoke and fumes. Mounted underneath several of the beakers are small cans of a blue gel, which burns much hotter than an ordinary candle, allowing him to speed up many reactions.

On another workbench (far away from any other flammable materials), the doctor kept his equipment for making bullets and mixing smokepowder. The top drawer contains twenty finished, normal bullets and one special bullet molded from pure silver.

In the ceiling above the door to the shop is a small, barely noticeable hole. Though this looks like a mere flaw, it is actually the catch for a set of retractable stairs that lead to the library. The hole can easily be reached using a cane, a poker, or the large stick that the doctor kept in the corner for that purpose.

A large stuffed dire wolf glares from its rickety wooden stand in the corner next to the kitchen door. This mangy old figure hardly looks like anything of importance, but if pulled away from the wall, it reveals a small staircase leading down to the cellar.

Cellar

This large storage area holds everything Van Richten had collected for fighting the monsters he has written about in his books. Weapons line most of the walls here, many of them made of obscure substances and several of them magical, including a powerful *sunsword* brought from Castle Ravenloft itself. He also kept a large soup tureen full of holy water, which he restocked regularly, though most of it has evaporated. The doctor also used this underground chamber to grow several rare types of mushrooms.

Upstairs Hallway

At the top of these stairs is the third of the stained giass windows. The bookshelves in this hallway contain all of the doctor's books alphabetized under the letters C and D.

Guest Room

This room was left mostly empty by Dr. Van Richten, who rarely had overnight guests. Since his disappearance, the Weathermay sisters have moved in, filling the room with their personal belongings. This is the only room that they felt comfortable in making their own, so they have quickly adapted it to their needs.

Bedrooom

This is the one room that has not changed at all since Van Richten's disappearance. For several months after he left, Mrs. Polk continued to come in and dust, but she never moved any of his belongings. After the twins moved in, they locked the room, intending to leave it sealed until his return.

Above the mantle hangs a large portrait of the doctor's son Erasmus leaning up against a tree and fishing. Behind this painting, Van Richten hid the spare key to the strong box downstairs and the larger one hidden under the false bottom of his wardrobe.

Never one to go unprepared, the doctor also kept a small, loaded snaplock pistol in the drawer next to his bed. Beneath that is his personal journal, the last entry of which states that he intended to seek treatment for the horrible nightmares he had been having.

Like many other rooms in his house, Van Richten's bedroom contains several bookshelves. These contain all of the books alphabetized under the letters E and F.

Library

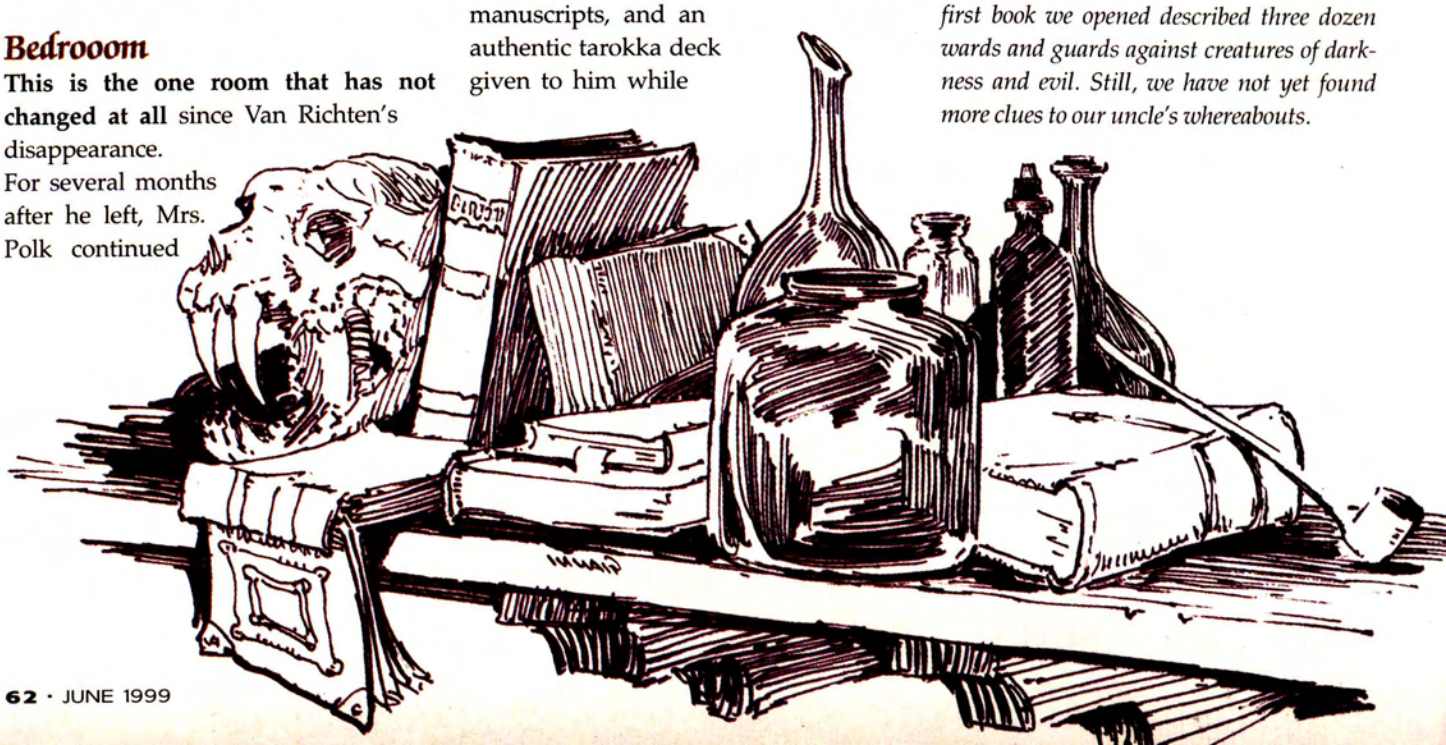
Almost half of the second floor is dedicated to Van Richten's library. The library walls are covered from floor to ceiling with bulging bookshelves containing volumes alphabetized under the letters G–Z. In many cases, stacks of books pile up in front of the bookshelves, waiting to be organized. At the back of the shelves along one wall is a small lever. When this lever is pulled, the shelves sink about a foot, revealing another, secret bookshelf, that holds the doctor's research notes, his unfinished manuscripts, and an authentic tarokka deck given to him while researching for *Guide to the Vistani*. Under the rug in front of these shelves is the secret staircase that leads to the laboratory.

Along the opposite wall is a large table covered with maps. Though most of these maps depict the Core domains of Ravenloft, some come from places much farther away (Krynn, Oerth, the Known World, and Sigil). A large globe of Abeir-Toril also sits on this table. Though Van Richten knew little of the world it depicts, he was fascinated by the object itself.

On the table in front of the fireplace sits a carved, wooden chessboard and a small stack of letters. This board was a gift from a noble gentleman in Nova Vaasa, Sir Tristen Hiregaard. Tristen and Van Richten had been playing a long-distance game of chess at the time of the doctor's disappearance, so the sisters have not disturbed the board. Still, they did reply to Sir Tristen's last letter, explaining to him the situation.

✣ ✤ ✣

Despite being briefly distracted by the Case of the Vanishing Cobbler, Gennifer and I have found what we were searching for much sooner than either of us thought possible! It was so simple that we almost missed it—to think, a hidden library within a library! Still, we dared not trigger the latch for fear that he had perhaps protected or trapped it somehow. Thus, we carefully removed everything from the shelves and used a bit of rope to pull the latch from around the corner in the hallway. And what a treasure trove we uncovered! The first book we opened described three dozen wards and guards against creatures of darkness and evil. Still, we have not yet found more clues to our uncle's whereabouts.



Wards and Guards

Each of these wards can be used in several different ways. Each ward description is followed by several different options, allowing the Dungeon Master to choose which effect best suits his or her campaign. In addition to these, the DM can also choose to have the item simply work as it is described or perhaps not even work at all.

Chime of the Beast

The *chime of the beast* hails from the distant land of Sri Raji. It is a small bell that must be made from the metal of a melted holy symbol and the silver used to kill a werebeast. Reportedly, if hung above a door or window, the bell tinkles whenever a werebeast of the type killed by the silver passes under it. Functioning bells reportedly radiate faint necromantic and divination magic, despite the fact that no spells are used in their creation.

Gennifer and Laurie have created such a bell and hung it over the door, next to the bell that announces customers when they enter into the shop. They eagerly (and apprehensively) await the day when their second bell chimes.

✢ The *chime of the beast* actually reacts to any werebeast that passes through the entrance.

✣ The *chime of the beast* activates only if an infected werebeast of the specified kind (rather than a natural one) passes through the entrance.

✤ The *chime of the beast* activates when anyone who has ever killed a werebeast of any kind comes through the door.

Fiend-Guard

The *fiend-guard* looks like a weather vane. It must be installed on the roof of the building it is supposed to protect. The stand must be made from cold-wrought iron clad in steel, while the directional pointer must be constructed from metal that at one time was part of a church devoted to a deity of good alignment. After the *fiend-guard* has been placed on the roof, an innocent child must kiss it. No fiend can enter a structure displaying such a device. Further, any fiend touched by the *fiend-guard* (or that attempts to use its vast powers) is wracked with great pain.

Van Richten constructed a *fiend-guard* some time ago. Gennifer and Laurie found it in the secret basement and had one of the young men in the neighborhood place it on the roof.

✢ The *fiend-guard* works as believed. A fiend that attempts to destroy the *fiend-guard* (even through spell-like effects or dominated minions) immediately suffers 3d10 points of damage. The fiend can still destroy the building, however.

✣ The *fiend-guard* works as believed, except the fiend can destroy the fiend-guard through any means except physical contact. The fiend suffers 3d10 points of damage if it comes into physical contact with the weather vane.

✤ Not only does the *fiend-guard* fail to keep out fiends but it also gives them a +5% bonus to their chance to *gate* in other fiends.

Mirror of Protection

The method of creating a *mirror of protection* is unknown, as Van Richten brought back the only known example from one of his last expeditions. As of his disappearance, he had yet to verify whether or not it worked.

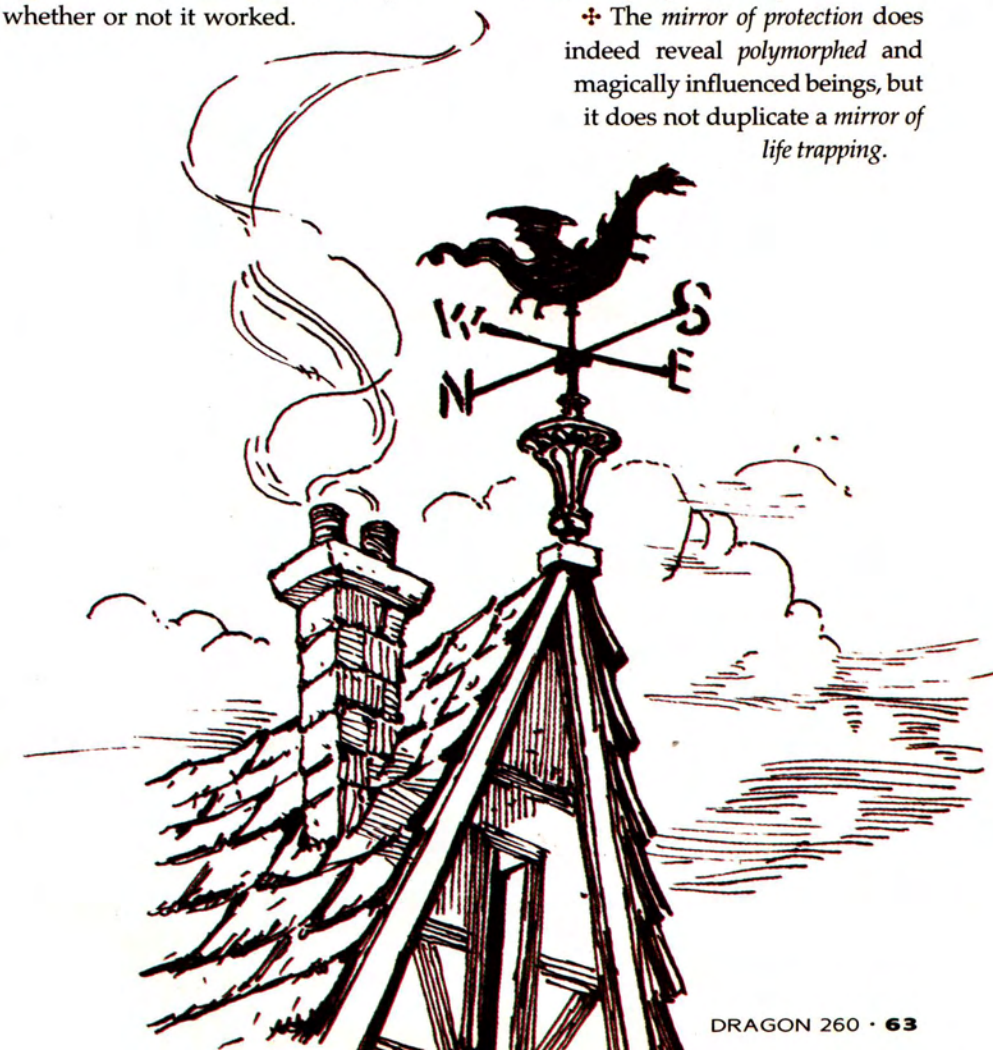
Reportedly the *mirror* always reveals the true appearance of someone standing in front of it, as well as revealing whether or not someone is under the influence of a *charm*, *magic jar*, or other mental domination. For example, Wizards using *polymorph self* appear in their true form in the *mirror's* reflection, regardless of their altered shape. The reflection of a *charmed* villager would be covered with a faint, black shadow.

The most powerful effect attributed to the *mirror* is that when the command phrase is uttered ("vek dit uhyre"), it immediately functions as a *mirror of life trapping*, drawing the reflected person within its silvery surface. The utterance of a second phrase ("tilbag dit uhyre") restores the victim.

Van Richten hung this *mirror* just inside the door to his shop so he could observe those who entered the shop. Gennifer and Laurie have left it there, and now they carefully scrutinize customers who pass by.

✢ The *mirror of protection* has only one function: It reflects vampires in addition to normal people and objects.

✣ The *mirror of protection* does indeed reveal *polymorphed* and magically influenced beings, but it does not duplicate a *mirror of life trapping*.



✤ The *mirror of protection* has no unique function, except that it has a mild enchantment preventing it from ever needing to be polished.

Amulets of Safekeeping

These unadorned steel or silver amulets hang on silver chains. They are hollow and can be opened by releasing a tiny latch and pivoting the lid on a pin. (However, some are welded shut and cannot be opened.) Inside is a bit of fur, skin, or bone from the creature against which the *amulet* is designed to protect the wearer. So long as the *amulet* is worn, the specified type of creature cannot attack the wearer physically. (The *amulets* do not protect against mental attacks.)

The *amulets* must be forged by a blacksmith who is pure of heart, using metal that has been *blessed* by a Good-aligned Priest. Once the *amulet* is completed, it must be *blessed* again. The chain must always be of pure silver, and it must receive the same blessings as the *amulet*.

So far, the twins have not created any *amulets*. They have yet to find a qualified blacksmith. (Van Richten experienced similar problems before them.)

✢ *Amulets of safekeeping* function as believed, as well as granting a +1 bonus to resist any mind-affecting powers the creature might have.

✣ *Amulets of safekeeping* work only against corporeal undead. They are useless against living creatures.

✤ *Amulets of safekeeping* do not protect against attack, but they grant the wearer a +2 bonus to resist mind-affecting attacks from the designated creature.

Set's Ointment

Set's ointment is a grayish salve made from rare herbs, ox grease, and ground mummy wrappings. Nomads revealed the recipe for this salve to Van Richten during his last visit to the Mist-shrouded Amber Wastes. The *ointment* protects from both the harsh sun of these lands and the dreaded, disease-causing touch of mummies. Unfortunately, it functions only if the wearer covers his or her entire body with it.

Although Van Richten has a sizable supply of this *ointment*, neither of the twins have yet brought themselves to test it; they find the concept revolting. However, they have promised each other that should they ever have reason to go mummy hunting, they will bring along a supply.

✢ *Set's ointment* automatically prevents mummy rot, but only for 2d4 strikes.

✣ *Set's ointment* works as believed, but its smell attracts insects and hungry wild beasts.

✤ *Set's ointment* grants the wearer a saving throw vs. poison to resist mummy rot the first 2d4 times struck.

Host's Revenge

The ward known as *host's revenge* can take many forms (the most common of which is a doorknocker), but whatever the form, it must be attached to the house. These wards originate among the wealthy of Dementlieu, and many stories circulate about their power. They can be created from any mixture of metal, but the metal must contain at least 13 silver pieces that were once owned by a man who was betrayed by his dearest friend.

If someone enters into a home and accepts the hospitality of a resident, any slight against those who dwell there will be visited upon the offender ten-fold. For example, a petty thief who accepts a lady's invitation for tea will find himself robbed of all belongings if he pinches so much as a silver spoon. Guests who utter an unkind word about a host from a protected house may find their own reputations ruined.

The knocker on Van Richten's door is one of these wards. As of yet, the twins do not know whether it works.

✢ The *host's revenge* casts a curse upon the errant guest that ranges in strength from embarrassing to lethal. (Defaming the host results in an embarrassing curse while murdering the host results in a lethal one, for example.)

✣ The *host's revenge* ward works only on people who have already failed one or more powers checks, plus it doubles the chance of failure on the next check.

✤ The *host's revenge* actually only causes the offender to have horrible nightmares until the act is somehow rectified. After one week, the person starts to lose 1 point of Constitution per day due to a lack of sleep.

✣ ✤ ✣

Today we received another response to our inquiries about Uncle Rudolph. Our correspondent also had no knowledge of Uncle Rudolph's fate. Laurie suggests that we travel to Nova Vaasa to investigate the Clinic for the Mentally Distressed, but I think we should first follow up on some of the leads closer to home. My head spins with the many unanswered questions we have found in Uncle's notebooks. Shall we brave the House on Gryphon Hill? Shall we secure passage aboard a ship and seek the council of the tragic lord of East Riding on Ghastria? Or did our Uncle meet a dire fate while investigating the legendary Dark Lurker of Morfenzi? Tonight, over dinner, we shall arrive at a decision.

Cindi Rice, former lead editor for the RAVENLOFT® *line, has recently moved into the even darker domain of brand management. Much of Steve Miller's work has been done in tandem with others, including the upcoming* Carnival *(with John W. Mangrum) and* A DRAGONLANCE® Reader's Companion: The Odyssey of Gilthanas *(with Douglas Niles and Stan!)*

Nodwick in:
CREEPS on the BORDERLANDS
OKAY... QUIETLY NOW... GET READY..
DIE, FOUL MONSTROSITY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
ER, I'M DISPATCHING AN EVIL BEAST TO OBLIVION, WHY?
YOU'RE DAMAGING THE OGRE EXHIBIT!
EXHIBIT?
IT'S NOT REAL?
IT'S STUFFED! WHY--WAIT! YOU'RE FOR REAL? LIKE, YOU'RE ADVENTURERS?
YOU'D THINK SO, WOULDN'T YOU?
SHUT UP!
CAN I GIVE YOU A TOUR?
TOUR? WHAT IS THIS, A MUSEUM?
KIND OF. SINCE EVERY ADVENTURER IN EXISTENCE CAME HERE AND WIPED OUT THE MONSTERS, WE KEEP-FOLK TURNED THESE CAVES INTO A TOURIST ATTRACTION!
AH! THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THOSE CARNIVAL-RIDE-LOOKING-THINGS THAT ARTAX SAID WERE "LOCAL FLORA."
SHUT UP!
YEAH, YOU COULDN'T PAY MONSTERS TO LIVE IN THE CAVES OF CHAOS.
BOOGA-BOOGA! I'M A SCARY GOBLIN! BOOGA!
LOOK OVER THERE! SHOPS SELLING CRYSTAL BALL SNOW GLOBES AND POINTY HATS!
CHAINMAIL T-SHIRTS! FROZEN GELATINOUS CUBES ON-A-STICK!
WHACK-A-HENCHMAN GAMES!
CLERICAL BATHROBES! BOTTLED HOLY SPRING WATER! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
CAVE of CHAOS CAFE
BORDERLAND BOOKS
Arcade
THIS IS WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT! ALL THE FLAVOR OF THRILLING ADVENTURE, SANITIZED AND PACKAGED AT A REASONABLE PRICE! IT'S FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!
CHET
MY AMULET OF PROTECTION FROM EVIL JUST MELTED!
LET'S CRITIQUE THEIR MARKETING STRATEGY...
I HOPE WE HALTED THE CORRUPTION BEFORE IT COULD SPREAD TO OTHER LANDS...
HOW ABOUT USING ROT GRUBS?
NAH! THESE GUYS DESERVE GREEN SLIME DOWN THEIR DRAWERS!
RELAX! THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME FOR BOTH!
BANG! BANG!
WARNING: EVIL MARKETING WEENIES
DANGER!
TORTURE FOR FUN & PROFIT

illustrated by Russell Walks

Fiction by
Kate Novak-Grubb

The Honor of Two Swords

HIDDEN IN THE BRANCHES OF AN OAK TREE, Priam Agrivar held his breath as he watched Ishi Barasume dive from the rail of the balcony window outside her bedroom. For a moment she was a blur of colors, the jet black of her shoulder-length hair and the lacquer of her sword's sheath, the coppery tone of her skin, the fire red of her tunic, the indigo blue of her trousers.

She landed without a waver on the edge of the water trough, cartwheeled off, drew her sword in mid-air, and hit the ground on the balls of her bare feet. Her long slender blade, a katana she called Deep River, was held at the ready, prepared to defend the courtyard of the Green Dragon Inn from an imaginary attack.

It was only an exercise, but its execution was perfect. As perfect as Ishi herself, Agrivar thought. Her grace and strength, skill and valor made her the perfect warrior … and the perfect friend.

Something kept them from growing closer though. Agrivar was not sure exactly what. In his heart he suspected it had something to do with the way Ishi secretly practiced these dangerous acrobatic maneuvers when she thought he was asleep, and the way he never asked her why she did so. There was a part of her life she was not ready to explain to him, a part he was afraid to ask about because she might not wish to explain, or because he might not wish to know. There was not yet, the paladin realized, a perfect trust between them.

A dog yelped outside the courtyard gate. Ishi looked up and gasped. Agrivar turned his attention to what she saw. Standing in the courtyard gateway was a scrawny easterner, a man dressed in Kozakuran armor similar to Ishi's own. He had long black hair, gleaming wet, pulled back in a gold band, and small, beady, red eyes. Before him he held out a cushion of yellow silk on which lay a medium length Kozakuran sword.

"Ishi Barasume," the stranger said.

Ishi remained motionless as the color drained from her face.

The stranger bowed, ever so slightly.

Ishi sheathed her sword and bowed low. A tremor shook her shoulders.

The stranger spoke in a language Agrivar did not understand. The speaker's tone was harsh, his look full of contempt. Agrivar burned to know what this man said, for the effect of his words on Ishi was profound. Ishi lowered her head, then sank to her knees.

Reaching out with his spirit, the paladin detected a surge of evil emanating from the stranger. Agrivar wanted to leap down from his hiding place and challenge this man berating Ishi, but he knew somehow that Ishi would never have wished him to witness this scene.

The stranger flipped over the cushion of yellow silk, spilling the sword onto the dust of the courtyard.

Ishi cried out. She crawled forward on her hands and knees, picked up the weapon, and clutched it to her chest. Only then did she look up again, glaring at the stranger. She answered him in Kozakuran, with a cold, determined tone.

The stranger laughed, and his shape shimmered in the morning light. Then he vanished, leaving his armor to fall in a pile before Ishi's kneeling figure. Atop the pile stood a tremendous black rat. Ishi drew back from the creature in disgust. The rat hissed at her, then ran out the courtyard gateway.

Ishi stood. For a moment she looked up at the window to Agrivar's room—where he would have been if he were not hiding in the oak tree. Then, clenching the hilt of the sword, Ishi ran out the courtyard gate after the rat.

Agrivar waited for several moments, stunned and confused, before he swung down from his hiding place in the oak tree and ran to the courtyard gate. The Green Dragon Inn stood on a hilltop surrounded by open pasture. Ishi was nowhere to be seen. A few goats grazed near the courtyard wall. The only other figure in sight was a marble statue of a small, exotic dog beside the gate. Ishi had called the statue Riko Inu. It was a good omen, she'd said. Agrivar slumped back against the gatepost. He had no idea what was going on, but he was certain it was not good.

"Where did she go?" he whispered.

Something barked excitedly near his feet. Agrivar looked down but saw only the statue of the small dog. Feeling foolish, the paladin rubbed the statue's polished head as Ishi had done when they'd first entered the inn. "Riko Inu?" he said.

Suddenly, blue smoke poured from the statue's ears and massed into a cloud at Agrivar's ankles. Then the smoke drifted away, revealing the frantically quivering form of a small dog with long, white hair. Agrivar picked up the creature which licked the paladin's ear and yelped. Agrivar heard the words, "Hurry! Follow me!" The dog leaped from his arms and burst down the hill toward the morning sun.

The paladin pursued, feeling ungainly, tripping over gopher mounds and stumbling in rabbit holes as the dog scurried nimbly ahead. The creature gave a great leap into the air and vanished. Without hesitation, Agrivar leaped after him.

Cold, dark water surrounded the paladin. He felt a momentary fear, for he could not float in his chainmail. In the next instant his feet touched a ledge, and he was able to scrabble above the surface of the water. He straightened to find himself standing in water up to his knees. His boots squelched in muck beneath the water. The air was chill and damp and fetid. Overhead hung weakly glowing lanterns of iron. Stone walls rose on either side of him. The water flowed sluggishly between the walls, black as night. The little dog paddled frantically until he reached Agrivar's knee and pawed at the paladin, trying to find purchase. Agrivar picked up the creature again.

"Where are we?" he whispered to the dog.

"Shh, not yet," the dog cautioned. "Move quietly."

Agrivar trudged through the water with as much stealth as he could muster in his leather boots and mail. Soon he reached a staircase that rose out of the water to a ledge guarded by a great black rat with beady red eyes. It could have been the same rat that fled from Ishi. It hissed at Agrivar's approach.

With a feral snarl, the little dog leaped from the paladin's arms, landed on the rat's back, and sank his teeth into the rodent's neck. The rat squealed furiously and tried to shake the dog loose, without success. Although the dog was no bigger than the rat, his jaws were more powerful. In a few moments the rat was still. The dog dropped the fresh rat corpse into the water. It floated past Agrivar without a sound.

The dog shook the water from its back. Then he barked out, "This way, Sir Agrivar." He ran along the ledge to another set of stairs.

Agrivar climbed out of the fetid water. "What's going on?" he demanded with a sharp whisper. "Where are we?" His patience was wearing thin. He felt ignorant and powerless, feelings he detested. "Who are you? And what was that rat thing? What did it say to Ishi?"

The little dog turned, cocked his head, and fixed the paladin with a curious look. "You don't understand Kozakuran?" the creature asked.

"No," Agrivar said, shaking his head. "Though Ishi has told me something of her country. Was that creature a goblin rat?"

"No," the dog answered. "That was a hengeyokai. Weaker than a goblin rat, but far more cunning. I am what your western sages would call a foo dog. My kind visit your world when we please. Many centuries ago, in Shou Lung, a wu jen—a wizard—put a spell on a marble statue of a dog. With this statue, the people of the wizard's village could petition me when they needed help dealing with evil spirits. A few years ago, a Tuigan soldier looted the statue and carried it to your land in the west. That is the statue outside the gate of the Green Dragon Inn. When Ishi patted the statue I sensed her, though she did not ask for help. Her ki is strong."

"Her what?" Agrivar asked.

"Her ki, her life force. She addressed the statue with respect, so I came here in my ethereal form to watch over her. You may call me by the name she gave the statue, Riko Inu."

"So what did this hengeyokai say to her, Riko Inu?"

"The hengeyokai came under false colors, wearing the symbol of her family's clan. He accused her of bringing shame upon her family by losing her father's wakhizashi, by abandoning it in the castle of someone called Lord Kori."

"Her father's wakhizashi—was that the sword the hengeyokai carried?" Agrivar asked.

"I think it must have been, Sir Agrivar."

"But why did she follow the hengeyokai here? And where *is* here?"

"I do not know," the foo dog said with a shake of his shaggy head. "Ishi followed the hengeyokai through a magical gate, and I wanted to show it to you, since you could not see it with your eyes. I will try to pick up her scent and lead you to her."

"Thank you," Agrivar said. Even if he didn't know where he was, at least he was on Ishi's trail.

"I am honored to be of assistance to you, Sir Agrivar." The small creature bowed his head.

"I'm honored to have your assistance, Riko Inu," the paladin replied bowing his head in return. "Lead on."

Riko Inu spun about and headed up the next flight of stairs. Agrivar followed. Atop the stairs was great door clad in strips of iron. It was locked fast, but in it was built a smaller door, which stood slightly ajar. With great effort, Agrivar managed to squeeze his great frame through the small opening.

Riko Inu sat waiting on the other side. Beyond the door was a twisting, turning staircase flanked by a canyon of high stone walls. Somewhere far overhead daylight shone. "I have Ishi's scent. She's come this way," Riko Inu declared and bounded upward.

The paladin called out for Riko Inu to wait, but the dog disappeared beyond a twist in the staircase. Agrivar followed warily. He'd left his sword back at the Green Dragon Inn, and he realized that not only was every turn in the stairs a perfect place for an ambush but also he was an easy target for anyone on the walls above. Although he remained unchallenged so far, he was climbing into a stronghold.

Finally, the stairs ascended into a courtyard, the strangest courtyard Agrivar had ever seen. A field of sand surrounded three large rocks, and a stunted and gnarled pine grew from a cleft in one of them. Moss grew part way up the stones. The sand was raked in flowing lines. Overall the courtyard created the illusion of a vast sea surrounding barren islands. The illusion was spoiled somewhat by the three large footprints that Agrivar had left in the sand before he'd noticed where he was walking.

There was no sign of Riko Inu. The little dog left no trace in the sand. Nor was there any trace of Ishi's footprints. Ishi could have leapt over the sand, he realized, or the dog might have taken his ethereal form to travel undetected.

Agrivar leaped toward one of the buildings that surrounded the courtyard. He landed in the sand, leaving two more footprints before he reached the edge of the "seascape."

The building before him was constructed of wood, plaster, and panels of fine paper set in wooden frames. He could discern no doorway until he remembered Ishi explaining how doors in her country often slid in grooves. Spying a small hole in one of the wooden frames, he used it as a finger catch and slid the wooden frame and paper panels to one side.

Within was a small room, or portion of a room, for the other three walls consisted of hanging curtains of delicate white fabric. The floor was covered in woven straw mats. A blue and green porcelain bowl sat on the floor in the center of the room.

Agrivar slid the curtains aside, exploring deeper into the building. Hanging lanterns dimly lit the interior. Each room was walled off by curtains or screens or sliding panels, many painted with delicate sketches of trees or birds or landscapes. Each room held some object, rare or everyday—a lute, a tea set, a wall of shelving piled with scrolls, a loom, a writing tray with pens and ink, a set of armor, a paper fan, an arrangement of silk flowers and dead branches. Each room had an uncluttered simplicity that was lovely to behold. Agrivar was struck with the notion that this place was very like Ishi, that perhaps she belonged here. Yet there was no trace of her.

Agrivar drew aside another curtain and froze. An easterner in full Kozakuran armor stood in the room, with a two handed sword drawn. The easterner glared at the paladin and snarled.

"Excuse my intrusion," Agrivar said. "I'm looking for a woman. Her name's Ishi Barasume."

The easterner bowed, then said something Agrivar could not understand.

Agrivar bowed politely and said, "I'm sorry. I don't understand."

The easterner continued to glare. Then he raised his sword.

In that moment Agrivar realized he was being challenged.

If the easterner's weapon was anything like Ishi's katana, it could slice him in half like an apple.

The swordsman remained frozen. Agrivar might have mistaken his inaction for hesitation, but he remembered Ishi explaining how eastern warriors were trained to envision the outcome of the combat before striking the first blow, sometimes making the combat unnecessary.

If you think I'm going to envision losing, Agrivar thought, you have another vision coming. The paladin had neither weapon nor shield, but he was a good deal taller and probably stronger than this stranger.

As the eastern warrior's sword slashed down, Agrivar crouched low and moved inward, grabbing his opponent's wrists before the deadly steel blade could find a target.

The easterner's blow was forceful, but Agrivar's hands were stronger, and the sword remained trapped. The easterner tried to yank his wrists from the paladin's fingers, but Agrivar held fast. "Envision an old-fashioned western brawl," Agrivar grunted.

The easterner shouted angrily and tried to step back, but Agrivar anticipated this move and stepped forward faster, knocking the warrior to the ground and landing on top of him.

In another moment Agrivar had his hand on the hilt of the sword and wrenched it from his opponent. He rolled to his knees and leaped to his feet, with the weapon between himself and his opponent, mindful of the second sword the man wore at his belt.

"Look, I don't want to hurt you," Agrivar said. "I just want to find Ishi Barasume."

The man on the floor rose to his feet and shouted at Agrivar, words the paladin could not understand.

Another man stepped out from behind a red-and-gold screen and spoke sharply to the warrior Agrivar had just bested. The warrior growled like a furious beast but left the room, charging through a set of curtains.

Agrivar examined this new stranger. He, too, was an easterner but nearly as tall as Agrivar. He had a warrior's build, but he wore neither weapon nor armor. He was dressed in a robe of brocaded silk. On his feet he wore sandals. His short, dark hair was gathered in a gold band atop his head, accentuating his high forehead. He was a handsome young man made more so by the grin on his face and the gleam in his dark eyes.

"Since my useless guard can't seem to kill you, you may as well be my guest," the stranger said.

"You speak the common tongue of the west?" Agrivar asked with surprise.

"I am well educated," the man replied.

"Please forgive my intrusion. My name is Priam Agrivar. I followed a friend here through a magical gate. I'm only trying to find her. Her name is Ishi Barasume."

"Ishi? Ishi is back? She received my message from my servant then? Excellent. Well, any friend of Ishi's … will have to be studied. I am Lord Kori." The man made a low bow.

Agrivar bowed in return. "Pleased to meet you," he replied. "So, you haven't seen Ishi?" he asked, feeling anxious for the woman's presence.

"I … missed her arrival, but I'm sure she'll make an appearance once she's made herself presentable," Lord Kori answered, with a meaningful look at Agrivar's clothing.

Agrivar was suddenly painfully aware that he must resemble a sewer rat, and in this orderly and artful place he stood out like a piece of trash. Water dripped from his tunic and chain mail, and his boots were covered with green slime, which he'd tracked across the woven mats covering the floor. He was unshaven, and he smelled.

"Please, enter," Lord Kori said graciously, leading Agrivar to the room behind the red-and-gold screen.

This room was far more sumptuous. Furs of striped beasts draped a low platform on one side, and the screens were brightly painted and decorated with gold leaf. A divan covered in yellow silk pillows stood in the center of the room. A black lacquered tray sat on the floor beside the divan. Upon it

rested a stoppered bottle and two cups carved from jade.

Lord Kori motioned for Agrivar to have a seat on one of the mats on the floor.

Agrivar held out the hilt of the sword to return it, but Lord Kori shook his head. "Keep it," he said with a sly smile.

The paladin sat cross-legged before the divan and lay the sword beside him. He couldn't help but note how fastidiously the nobleman skirted around the wet and slimy spots he had tracked on the mats.

Lord Kori lowered himself onto the divan. He nodded to the jade bottle on the tray. "A cup of wine to refresh yourself?"

"Thank you, but I don't drink," Agrivar replied.

"You don't drink!" Lord Kori laughed. "All you western barbarians are famous for drinking."

"I'm less famous than the rest," Agrivar said.

Lord Kori chuckled. "What do you do when you're thirsty?"

"I drink water," Agrivar explained.

"Water. How foul. We can't serve you water. It's so very poisonous," the nobleman declared. He clapped his hands once, and from behind one of the screens came a large snow monkey walking upright and wearing a green silken robe.

The monkey bowed. Lord Kori spoke in Kozakuran. The monkey bowed and retreated behind the screen. A few moments later the monkey returned with a blue porcelain bowl which it set down on the tray. It bowed again to Lord Kori and left.

Lord Kori motioned to the bowl. It was filled with a white liquid. "It's wild mare's milk," Lord Kori explained. "They say the horde warriors drink it for strength."

Agrivar picked up the bowl cautiously. He'd never had mare's milk before, but he didn't want to appear rude by sniffing at it.

"To Ishi," Lord Kori said, holding up one of the jade cups filled with wine. He drained it and set it down on the lacquered table.

"To Ishi," Agrivar agreed and sipped at the mare's milk. It was thin and sweet. He swallowed the remainder and set the bowl beside Lord Kori's cup.

There was a moment of silence. Then the paladin asked, "How do you know Ishi, Lord Kori?"

"We were introduced by the shikken—you know who that is?" Lord Kori asked.

"Regent for the shogun," Agrivar replied. Although it had taken weeks, Ishi had managed to help him comprehend some of the tangled politics of Kozakura.

"You have had some education as well," Lord Kori noted. "Do you come from a landed family, Priam Agrivar?"

"If I wanted to settle down, there's a holding waiting for me," the paladin replied. Land, Ishi had once explained to him, was a symbol of rank in Kozakura. "Why did the shikken introduce you to Ishi?"

"I'd defeated his army—twice. I'm not a greedy man, however. I wasn't interested in his position … yet. I was prepared to settle for the honor of a landed title. The shikken told me Ishi was the daughter of one of the emperor's sons and the shogun's mother's sister. An alliance with her would assure my appointment as lord of the province."

"An alliance?" Agrivar asked. "As in marriage?" He felt a pit in his stomach.

"Naturally," Lord Kori replied. "What other kind of alliance is there where a woman is concerned? On our wedding night, however, my bride told me that her parents were both common bushi. Hardly more than peasants. What can the shikken have hoped to achieve by having me wed a commoner, do you think?"

While Agrivar was loathe to persuade this arrogant nobleman to enter into an alliance with Ishi, the paladin could hardly allow any insult to Ishi to go unchallenged. "Whatever her parentage, Ishi is far from common," he retorted coolly. "She is the most remarkable woman I have ever met, and I have met many remarkable women."

"So the peasant girl has deceived another man of rank with her tricks. You have my sympathies," Lord Kori replied.

Agrivar bristled. "Ishi's tricks are her grace and strength. In the western realms we call them virtues, and they have earned her our respect."

Lord Kori snorted in amusement. "The west is a barbarous land with a peculiar motto: Every man a hero. Here in the east we know that order can be maintained only when every man remembers his place. Virtue lies in remaining dutiful to the position in which the gods placed one at birth. But of course Ishi comes from a line of peasants who forgot their place."

Agrivar remained very still and kept his breathing steady in an effort to disguise his anger. "If you feel that way, why did you have your servant return her father's wakhizashi?"

"I thought having something as filthy as a rat hengeyokai returning to her what she so carelessly left behind was a fitting insult to her honor. I hadn't actually expected her to return. This could be even more interesting."

A sense of unease chilled the paladin's blood. He felt suddenly that he would be more comfortable with the sword in his hands, but when he tried to move, his arms were stiff and his hands felt like lead weights. Even his face felt stiff. He looked up at Lord Kori with shock. The mare's milk had been drugged. "Why?" he just barely managed to ask.

Lord Kori rose to his feet. "Why?" The nobleman bent over and whispered in the paladin's ear, "Your little peasant friend's father was a troublemaker whom I killed for the insolence of impersonating a samurai. On our wedding night she took her revenge by slicing off my head and imprisoning me with magic for over a decade. She will answer for that affront. Killing you is just another way of insulting her."

With an effort of superhuman will Agrivar fought off the drugged numbness just enough to straighten out his leg, aiming at Lord Kori's shin. The movement was slow and weak, and would do no more than nudge the nobleman, but the effect it had was most interesting.

Lord Kori leaped backward as if from a sword's swing. Agrivar's boot still grazed the skin of the nobleman's ankle. The portion of Lord Kori's flesh with which Agrivar had connected sizzled and steamed as if it had been branded. The easterner cursed in Kozakuran, a phrase that Agrivar had heard Ishi use before.

"For that you will pay," Lord Kori growled. "I had considered giving you the quick death of a warrior, but now your death will be slow and painful."

Unable to move his muscles to keep his balance, Agrivar toppled over on his side. As Lord Kori limped from the room Agrivar focused with his paladin's sense on the nobleman. Evil emanated from the easterner like heat from a fire.

As Lord Kori disappeared from view, a second evil of a lesser nature assailed Agrivar's senses. The snow monkey wearing the green robe returned to the room. It approached the paladin cautiously, sniffing, then poking at him to be sure he was immobilized completely. Agrivar felt a tickle on his left wrist. He'd left his bracers with the rest of his plate mail back in his room at the Green Dragon Inn.

Suddenly a sharp pain shot up his left arm. The snow monkey had bitten into his wrist. It began lapping at the blood.

The irony aggravated the paladin no end. A short while ago he'd defeated a fully armed and armored opponent with nothing but his strength. Now he was being chewed to death by a monkey.

Suddenly a small, furry shadow leaped across the room, landing on the snow monkey. A furious growling and howling ensued as Riko Inu tore at the snow monkey's throat with his teeth, and the snow monkey clawed at the foo dog with its front paws. Riko Inu had landed the first blow though, and his jaw was a vice clamping down on the monkey's life.

It was horrible to watch, but there was a grim satisfaction in watching the monkey die. Riko Inu whipped his muscular neck and tossed the foul creature against one of the screens. It slid to the floor with a thump.

The little dog padded up to Agrivar's face and licked his cheek. The warmth of the dog's pink tongue made Agrivar's face feel a little less stiff. He was able to ask, "Ishi?"

"I found her, Sir Agrivar," the dog whisper. "She's following me. Hang on. She'll be here soon."

Agrivar started to a warm touch. Ishi knelt beside him, pouring a potion down his throat. Her hair hung unbound, gleaming like lacquer. She was dressed in layers of beautifully brocaded silken robes tied at her waist with a wide sash. The wakhizashi was tucked into the sash. Her katana was in the sheath on her back. Her face was fixed in a mask of determined calm.

Pins and needles pricked at every muscle in his body, but eventually Agrivar was able to stretch out fully. When the blood finally flowed freely in his limbs and the pain subsided, he sat up, reached out and took hold of one of Ishi's hands. "Ishi, what is going on?" he whispered.

"You should not have come," Ishi whispered.

"How could I not come?" Agrivar replied. He put his hands on her shoulders and squeezed them gently. "I was watching you from the tree this morning when that rat thing came. I was worried for you, Ishi. You looked so distraught. Lord Kori said that you were married, that you cut off his head. Is he mad? What is going on?"

Ishi hung her head. "It is not easy to speak of such shame," she said. "Now it does not matter. I will die fighting Lord Kori and so regain my honor."

"Don't talk of your death like that. Tell me why," Agrivar insisted.

Ishi sighed. "My parents were soldiers in the army of the lord of this castle. Lord Kori and his troops mowed down the lord's army. For his valor in that combat the lord bestowed upon my father this katana and wakhizashi, and the honor of wearing both swords together. When my father tried to stop Kori's soldiers from looting the village outside this castle, Kori accused him of impersonating a samurai and had my father executed. My mother died defending this castle from Lord Kori's siege. Lord Kori took the castle and slaughtered the lord and his family.

"I was not here at the time. I was training with a great kensai who had befriended my parents. After my parents died, when I was fifteen, a man named Po came to my kensai's school, and my kensai said I was to go with Po for special training so that I could better serve my country and the emperor. For some time I thought perhaps Master Po was a monk, but later I realized that the training and the orders I received did not truly follow the Path and the Way."

The warrior woman's voice broke on the words the Path and the Way. The Path and the Way, Agrivar knew, was the religious philosophy Ishi's parents had brought her up to follow.

Ishi took a deep breath and when she spoke again there was anger in her voice. "When I was sixteen, Master Po brought me to the court of the emperor where the shikken introduced me to Lord Kori. Master Po said Lord Kori and I were to be married, and he instructed me on how to fool Lord Kori into believing I was a lady and then how to kill him. I would have vengeance on the man responsible for my parents' deaths, the man who took my father's weapons and destroyed the shogun's lord and the emperor's peace."

Ishi held out a small vial of clear glass. "I was to slip this in Lord Kori's wine, cut off his head, and toss his body in the sewer."

Ishi looked down at the vial in her hand. It was still full of some liquid, a liquid clear as water.

"What happened?" Agrivar prodded gently.

Ishi looked back up at the paladin. Her tone was soft and gentle. "You know when one is young how proud one is, how certain is one's belief in one's ideals?"

Agrivar nodded. Pride and ideals were something they had in common, one of the things that attracted him to the eastern warrior woman.

"I was not," Ishi said bitterly, "some common assassin who poisoned people and hid their bodies. I was a warrior who followed the Path and the Way. I told Lord Kori who I was and challenged him to regain my father's swords. He laughed at me as if I were a child. He gave me my father's wakhizashi but refused to hand a katana to a peasant. I insulted Kori until he grew angry enough to accept my challenge."

Ishi stroked the hilt ornaments of the wakhizashi. Just above the hand guard was a golden carp. Ivory cranes decorated both sides of the hilt, and a jade frog crouched on the pommel.

"Our duel did not last long. Lord Kori was reputed to be a great swordsman. To this day I do not know whether I owe my stroke to skill, luck of the gods, or Kori's desire to taunt me. I sliced off his head in one clean stroke."

Ishi smiled fiercely, then frowned. "There was no blood," she said, "and as I stood there, waiting for the body to topple over, it bent down and picked up the head. It held the head out to me. The right eye winked. The mouth laughed and called me a foolish peasant girl."

"So Kori's not human," Agrivar noted. "That explains a lot. What happened then?"

Ishi lowered her head, and her voice grew soft with shame. "My courage failed me. I fled in fear. I used my wakhizashi to bar the doors of the room where we'd fought, locking Kori in. I heard him pulling on the doors, screeching and howling. I crept through the castle, afraid his men would be alerted, but they had all reverted to their true form as animals. I discovered my father's katana in Lord Kori's chamber and took it."

Tears fell from Ishi's eyes. "I had no idea what to do next, where to go. I could not return and admit my cowardice to my kensai, nor my disobedience to Master Po. Lord Kori was now alerted to the shikken's treachery, and it was my fault. I had not killed my father's slayer, and I hadn't the courage to take back the wakhizashi that imprisoned him. I had failed completely."

"So you left Kozakura?" Agrivar asked.

Ishi nodded. "Master Po told me of the magical gate in the sewage tunnel. At that time the gate led to Shou Lung. The gate was enchanted so it would lead to the last person to pass through. That is how Lord Kori's servant found me."

"But Lord Kori did not come himself," Agrivar mused.

"Why should he?" Ishi asked.

Agrivar put his hands on Ishi's shoulders. "Ishi, Kori hates you. He wants revenge. He couldn't guarantee that the rat thing would entice you back. Yet by sending the rat, Kori lost the element of surprise. I think there's a reason he didn't just follow you through the gate aside from being too fastidious to travel through a sewer. He said you imprisoned him with magic for over a decade. What magic?"

"It was no magic," Ishi insisted. "I barred the door with the wakhizashi. I think a thief broke into the castle and pulled the wakhizashi out of the door. I found his body lying in front of the door, dead about a week. He must have freed Lord Kori trying to steal the sword, and Lord Kori killed him and ate his heart."

"Kori ate the thief's heart?" Agrivar repeated with disgust.

"Kori must have been very hungry after all those years. That is what he does with his conquests. It is one of the reasons the shikken did not want to make him a provincial lord."

Agrivar refrained from commenting on the Kozakuran diet. It was not a good time for a joke. He looked down at the wakhizashi's hilt decorations, a carp, cranes, a frog. "Ishi, your katana's name is Deep River. What name does the wakhizashi have?"

"Flooding River," Ishi replied.

"Is it magic?"

Ishi looked surprised. "Do you think it is?"

"It cut off Kori's head. It held him in a room. If the blade itself isn't magical, the name might be. Lord Kori dislikes water. I don't think he could follow you through the gate."

"It does not matter, Agrivar," Ishi said firmly. "I had to return to fight Kori again. Not only is my honor at stake but so are the lives of the Kozakurans. He will attack them again. This time he may not agree to a peace."

"I'm not disagreeing, Ishi."

"I must fight him alone," Ishi said with equal firmness. "To regain my honor. You must not interfere."

Agrivar took Ishi's hands in his own. "Ishi, your honor is as important to me as my own," he said. "I will not interfere with your combat. But what will you do once you've cut off Kori's head a second time?"

Ishi shrugged. "What can I do except keep fighting until there are too many pieces left for Kori to put back again?"

From somewhere nearby Kori shouted Ishi's name, and added a string of Kozakuran that Agrivar could not understand.

"I must face him now!" Ishi hissed, rising swiftly to her feet. She disappeared behind a curtain.

Agrivar rose unsteadily to his feet, shaking off the effects of the drug Kori had given him. He shoved passed the curtain, but the warrior woman was nowhere to be seen. Fortunately he had Riko Inu to lead him through the maze of curtains and screens. The little dog stopped short just inside a room containing a three-foot-high cast iron sculpture of a horse.

Ishi and Lord Kori stood on either side of the horse. They glared at each other, frozen in a tableau.

Envision him headless, Ishi, Agrivar thought.

"Go on, bushi peasant, draw your father's katana," Lord Kori mocked her. "You think you're worthy, don't you?"

Ishi shot an uncertain glance at Agrivar.

He fears the wakhizashi, Agrivar realized, but not the katana. "The wakhizashi was good enough to behead you before," the paladin noted smugly. "Why should she soil her katana on the likes of you?"

Ishi focused her attention back on her foe, drawing the wakhizashi Flooding River from the sash at her waist. "I will take Sir Agrivar's advice. He is wise in the ways of honor."

Kori's lip curled up in a snarl. "When I have finished with you, bushi, I will see that this barbarian suffers greatly for a long time."

"Fight now, boast later," Ishi retorted.

Kori leaped upward and hung like smoke a few feet in the air. Agrivar licked his lips nervously, wondering if Kori used magic, could Ishi still defeat him.

Kori clapped his hands. A fully armored warrior wielding a katana stepped out from behind a curtain and began closing on Agrivar.

With her free hand, Ishi drew her own katana and tossed it to the paladin. He caught it just as the warrior woman leaped upward.

Although Agrivar could sense no breeze in the room, the hem and the long sleeves of Ishi's robe and her dark hair fluttered behind her. She could not use magic to float in the air, but her leap was higher than Kori's, and she swung her blade at him as she fell past him.

Kori caught Ishi's wakhizashi on his katana. Agrivar swung Ishi's katana at Kori's guard. The air rang with the peal of fine eastern steel.

Ishi landed on the back of the horse sculpture and swung again, aiming at Kori's feet. Kori rose another foot and avoided her blow.

Then Kori came down, quickly, his feet kicking at the iron horse, knocking it over, unbalancing Ishi.

Ishi somersaulted forward, landing at Kori's left shoulder. She struck at his arm, slicing it above the elbow. Kori's forearm fell to the floor. There was no blood, and the hand at the end of the severed arm grabbed the hem of Ishi's robe.

A small cry escaped Ishi's lips. She leaped backward and slashed off the bottom of her gown with her weapon. The forearm dropped again to the floor.

Agrivar's blade sliced through his opponent's armor and chest. Unlike Kori, the guard bled profusely and fell to the ground with a screech.

Kori snapped out an unknown Kozakuran word. Prickles of electric energy ran down his katana, massing in an ominous ball of green light.

Ishi skewered the hand on the floor with her wakhizashi and swung it off the blade through the curtains into another room.

Kori pointed his sword at Ishi.

"Ishi!" Agrivar cried out. "Look out!"

Without even looking at Kori, Ishi dodged to the left. The ball of green light soared over the space she'd just vacated and slammed into a sliding panel. The panel burst into flame.

Another armored guard stepped out from behind a curtain, brandishing a sword at Agrivar's heart. The paladin, with a far greater reach, stabbed the eastern warrior in the throat just above the iron collar protecting his neck. The guard fell in a heap beside his predecessor.

A third guard leaped out from behind another curtain, howling more like a beast than a man. Agrivar parried the attacker's blade with his own, but he did not immediately counterattack. His attention was diverted from his own battle by the second ball of green light forming on Kori's sword.

Ishi stood frozen, staring at the magical energy, as if too frightened to move. The ball flew from Kori's blade. Ishi reached into the sash at her waist and pulled out a small hand mirror and held it out before her. The green light bounced off the mirror and sped back toward Kori, slamming into his chest. A blackened, singed hole the size of a melon smoked on the easterner's robe. He screamed with fury, a wordless roar that knocked over a screen and set all the curtains in the room whipping about.

Ishi lost no time pressing her advantage. She leaped over the iron horse, legs first, landing a kick to Kori's legs. The monster toppled to the ground.

Ishi landed on top of him, and, with a lightning stroke, sliced off his head. The head fell backward, rolling slightly, and stopped. Once again there was no blood.

The guard facing Agrivar jumped up and slashed downward. Agrivar jumped backward, but his opponent's blade tore through the paladin's tunic and the front of his his chainmail, just missing his flesh. Agrivar turned his full attention on his opponent. He slashed ferociously with the light eastern sword until the warrior's shoulder guards fell to the floor and his armored sheath slid down his torso. The armor entangled the guard's legs, causing him to fall over.

Agrivar turned back in time to see Kori's body levitate upward, knocking Ishi off balance. Ishi landed on her left hand and cartwheeled to a defensive stance.

Another magical word issued from the decapitated head's lips, and a curtain behind Ishi began to whip around her like a snake. Kori's body began to drift toward the swordswoman, with its katana outward.

"Riko Inu," Agrivar whispered. "Don't you think it's fair that, if a head gets cut off, it should be disqualified from the rest of the combat?"

"Most definitely, Sir Agrivar," the foo dog agreed. "Shall I fetch it for you?"

"Please," the paladin replied.

Ishi spun like a dervish, disentangling herself from the enchanted curtain just in time to raise her wakhizashi to fend off Kori's katana. The two easterners, woman and walking corpse, began to slash at each other with fury, each one fending off the other's blow with his or her own weapon.

Riko Inu bounded into the room, bit down on the tail of hair atop Kori's head, and dragged the head across the room.

Kori's head screeched. Agrivar yanked the curtain beside him from the ceiling and dropped it over the head that Riko Inu laid at his feet. Scooping the head up in the curtain, Agrivar asked, "Riko Inu, could you please lead me back to the gate."

"You don't want to see the end?" the little creature asked with surprise.

"It will be over soon," the paladin replied.

Riko Inu dashed across the room, between the feet of a fourth and fifth armored guard. Agrivar swung Kori's bundled head before him. Inside the swathing, Kori was shrieking. The guards stepped back in alarm. Agrivar bolted past them, then turned back, still swinging the head.

Kori's body levitated away from Ishi and began flying toward the paladin.

"Run for it!" Agrivar called out to Riko Inu.

The dog began to dash through the castle rooms, with Agrivar at his heels. They burst out into the "seascape," churning the sand beneath their feet as they made their way to the staircase down to the sewer.

Agrivar caught sight of Kori's body flying after him with Ishi in pursuit. The paladin bounded down the stairs two at a time. Inside the bundle of curtains he sensed Kori's head trying to chew its way through the silken fabric.

Agrivar squeezed carefully through the little door at the base of the stairs. He skirted the ledge above the sewer and slipped silently down the staircase into the sewer. He plucked up Riko Inu and waded toward the gate.

"The gate is right in front of us, Sir Agrivar," the foo dog barked.

Kori's body thumped on the little door's frame then pushed its way into the sewer. Heedless of the danger the water presented, the body began to fly down the tunnel.

"Grab hold, Riko Inu!" Agrivar said, holding up the bundled head for the little dog to take in his jaws.

Riko Inu clamped his teeth down on the curtain.

"Now, jump through the gate!" the paladin shouted, tossing the little dog and Kori's head into the water.

Riko Inu sank beneath the surface. A momentary flash of bright light lit the surface of the water, then subsided.

Ishi slipped through the little door and dashed along the ledge after Kori's body. The body picked up speed as it moved toward Agrivar, katana outward like a pike.

Ishi leaped across the water, just managing to grab hold of Kori's feet. The swordswoman splashed into the water, pulling the headless body with her.

The water in the sewer suddenly grew very cold, and a great chilly mist rose from the surface.

Agrivar reached into the water and helped Ishi to her feet. The mist blew down the sewer, leaving Kori's body bobbing in the water, steaming and popping like a roasting duck. The flesh began to shrivel away. A horrible old fish stench, worse than the sewer smell, rose from the body.

The two warriors watched as the body dissipated in the water. In the end Kori's robes fell away, leaving only a fist-sized crystal of solid ice floating in the sewer.

"I'd be willing to bet that the vial Master Po gave you," Agrivar said, "contains water. Kori told me that water was poisonous. I realized he wasn't joking. For him, it was."

With the end of her long sleeve, Ishi fished the crystal of ice from the water. "We need to dispose of this somehow," she said.

"We can take it back to the west," Agrivar suggested. "Or I could take it back for you, if you wished to stay here now. If honor is satisfied, there's no reason for you to remain an exile from your home."

"No," Ishi agreed. "But now that I have regained my honor, I would rather remain in the company of the friend who aided me."

Agrivar smiled. The weight of fear that she would stay lifted from his heart.

They jumped back through the gate, back to the field surrounding the Green Dragon Inn.

Riko Inu was shaking Lord Kori's head by his tail of hair. The foo dog was like a puppy playing with a rag toy. When he spied Agrivar and Ishi he padded over, dragging the head. He dropped the head at Ishi's feet.

Lord Kori's face was covered with sores where the water had seared his flesh, but his eyes glittered as they glared up at the warriors. "Priam Agrivar, the honorable barbarian, and Ishi Barasume, the peasant sword master," he mocked. "The day will come when you will each watch as I dine on the innards of the other. Then I shall devour the hearts of all the members of your family. Fare not well."

The head vanished.

"His heart?" Riko Inu asked excitedly. "Where is his heart?"

"You mean this," Ishi asked, holding out the crystal of ice left from Kori's body.

"Yes," the foo dog barked. He snatched up the crystal, crunched it in his teeth, and wolfed it down. "Delicious," he said with a slavering growl.

"You easterners eat the darnedest things," Agrivar noted.

Ishi laughed. She reached down and patted the foo dog. "Thank you for your help, Riko Inu."

"Yes," Agrivar said. "Thank you."

"You are very welcome, Ishi Barasume, Sir Agrivar. Farewell." The foo dog vanished.

Ishi stood up and faced the paladin. There was a dark look on her face. "It is an evil thing to have such a curse on one's family's future."

Agrivar shrugged. "I don't know. I think if we ever have children, they'd be able to wallop Kori as easily as their mother did."

Ishi flushed and lowered her eyes. But now her honor was restored, and she raised her eyes back to Agrivar's and smiled.

"Yes," she agreed. "They will."

Kate Novak frittered her adolescence away reading science fiction and writing sappy Star Trek stories. In college she moved on to fantasy and playing the D&D® game. She is co-author of the Finder's Stone Trilogy and more recently of Finder's Bane *and* Tymora's Luck.

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The Ecology of the Aspis

Statement of Explanation

Query: What do you give a six-foot-tall bug monster that wants to trade?

Statement of fact: Anything it wants.

by
Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by
Brad McDevitt

KARL THE WOODCUTTER WAS USED TO SOLITUDE. Every day, he left his small cottage in the woods with some bread and cheese wrapped in a clean cloth for his lunch and his trusty ax upon his shoulder to go fell trees. He was used to the sounds of the forest: the chirping of the birds, the chatter of the squirrels, his own grunts as he swung his ax with a rhythmic efficiency. He was used to the smells of woodcutting: the clean scent of the freshly-cut pine, the heavy, woodsy smell of growing things, even the presence of his own sweat as he toiled at his work. He was used to the forest's inhabitants: the chipmunks who watched him with a wary eye, the dragonflies that buzzed through the air in a frantic dance of shining colors, even the occasional deer seen in the distance.

He was therefore surprised when a trio of giant insects approached him one day.

These were like no insects he had ever seen before. For one thing, they walked upright on their hind legs. Their stocky bodies were covered in a hard, chitinous armor like beetles, only theirs was grayish-white, like no beetle he'd ever heard of.[1] They reminded him of weevils, with their elongated probosci and the two short, stubby antennae poking up halfway down their narrow faces—only weevils as big as he was, nearly six feet tall.

With a grunt, Karl pulled the ax from the tree he had been chopping—his younger days, alas, were behind him—and waved it in what he hoped was a menacing fashion at the insect intruders. "Keep away," he warned.

"Kee paway," agreed one of the bugs.

"I mean it," Karl said, drawing his weapon back by his shoulder, ready to swing if they came closer.

"I meenit," replied the bug sagely, to which one of his companions added, "Kee paway."

They advanced upon the woodcutter, and Karl swung his ax. Had the lead bug been a tree, the ax would have sunk into the trunk with a satisfying thunk! However, the bug merely grabbed the ax handle in its two left hands[2] and deftly

1. The chitinous armor covering an aspis drone's body provides excellent protection from harm. Not only does it give the creature a natural AC of 3 but also it makes the aspis immune to cold and electricity and halves any fire-based damage taken.

2. Aspis drones have manipulatory claws at the

pulled it from Karl's grasp. Karl, unarmed, was unable to prevent the two other bugs from rushing him. He tried fighting them off, but their eight arms against his two were too much. He was lifted from his feet and carried, arms pinned, between the two upright insects while the third examined his ax and the tree he had been chopping. "I meenit," the bug said knowingly. Then, by some signal that Karl was unable to fathom,[3] the one bug motioned the others to depart, and off they went, taking the old woodcutter with them.

The trip was brief and uneventful. In less time than it would have taken Karl to eat his lunch, the bugs arrived at their destination and dropped him down a hole in the forest floor. Karl slid down an angled shaft that led into a large chamber. It was dark there, lit only by the feeble rays of sunlight filtering down from the entry shaft above.[4] Before the woodcutter could get his bearings, two more bugs came at him from out of the darkness and held him in place while his three escorts climbed down the shaft. "Confound it, let me go!" he exploded, struggling with his captors.

The bug with Karl's ax approached, staring into his face with multifaceted eyes. "Con foundit. Let meego." When that got no response from the old man, he tried "I meenit. Kee paway." Karl only stared at the bug, a look of confusion on his weathered face. The bug stared back at him for a short while, then, again at some signal that Karl missed, his two captors dragged him away to a chamber deeper in the nest.

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The drone approached the cow's chamber, ready to give his report. As usual, it was pitch black in the chamber, but that didn't bother him. He could smell the cow's presence, picking her unique scent out of all the others. If that wasn't enough, he could feel the thick liquid that covered the walls and floor of the cow's chamber oozing between his feet.[5] "Statement of fact: We have captured a human, as ordered," he reported to the cow in the scent-language of the aspis.[6]

"Feeling of strong satisfaction: Good. Query: Has it been taken to the learning chamber?"

"Statement of affirmation: Yes."

"Command: Learn his strange manner of communication. Clarification: I wish three drones to learn; instruct the two that went with you to learn as well."

"Statement of undying obeisance: It will be done."

"Feeling of satisfaction: Good. Command: You may go."

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The next few weeks were trying for the three drones. There were difficulties with the human from the start. He didn't like being in the dark, so one of the drones opened the trap door in the tunnel overhead to let in sunlight. He immediately tried escaping up the shaft and had to be dragged back down. He was finicky, refusing to eat tree bark and the specially harvested mold from the granaries.[7] Even after conveying to the drones the concept that he ate animal flesh, he balked when they offered him meat from a dead drone. Nor did he want to dig for earthworms or beetles in the soil of the nest. In the end, he seemed satisfied with fruit and nuts brought from the trees in the forest.

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ends of each of their six limbs. Each can be used as a hand, although generally only the front four limbs are used as "arms," and then only when the drone is walking upright. This allows the drone to use two-handed weapons (usually short swords or hand axes) and two shields when standing erect.

The shields are both held on the same side, with the weapons held in the arms on the other side. (Like humans, aspis drones can be right-handed or left-handed.) Aspis do not hold a shield and a weapon on the same side of the body, as the shield interferes with the weapon's movement. Optionally, they may eschew shields and employ two crossbows, firing one and reloading the other each round.

If an aspis drone must fight without weapons, it strikes with two of its claws per round, inflicting 1–4 points of damage with each successful hit.

3. Aspis communicate among themselves via a language of scents, which they produce from glands in their bodies and detect with their extremely sensitive olfactory sense. Humans are unable to pick up even the slightest traces of these chemical scents and so are generally unaware of aspis "speech." Fortunately, about 5% of the aspis drones in a given nest are able to speak a basic form of a spoken language—generally the common tongue of a given area.

4. Aspis nests are underground, not far below the surface. Typically, they consist of a primary entrance leading to a central chamber. From this chamber radiate several low passageways. One leads to the egg chambers and grub hatcheries. (There are usually 1–3 of the former and 1–6 of the latter, depending on the size of the nest.) Another leads to the granaries (2–4 per nest), where foodstuffs are stored. The third leads to the chamber of the "cow"—the aspis equivalent of a queen in an ant colony. There are side passages along each of the tunnels, leading to chemical preparation rooms and small storage areas where the nest keeps its shields, weapons, and any treasure—although many aspis nests do not realize the value of gems and coins and treat them as debris.

Normally, none of these underground chambers is lit, except for what little light filters down into the central chamber. This doesn't bother the aspis drones, who are able to maneuver in the dark using their excellent hearing and olfactory senses. (Aspis drones receive the equivalent of the Blind-Fighting nonweapon proficiency.) However, most aspis nests have several "escape routes"—vertical tunnels leading to the surface, whose camouflaged "trap doors" can be opened to let light into the chamber directly below. The chambers directly beneath these escape tunnels are generally left empty, so that the rooms may be put to various uses as the need arises. If otherwise empty, these rooms contain at least one aspis drone on guard duty to prevent enemies from infiltrating the nest.

5. Just as each ant colony has a single queen, each aspis nest has but one cow. The cow is the only female in the entire nest, as all drones and larvae are male. Physically, the cow is similar to the aspis' larval stage, looking like a giant, 15' long maggot. Cows are pasty white, the result of living an entirely underground existence.

The cow, while less intelligent than the drones, is nevertheless in complete charge of all aspects of aspis life. The cow gives a basic command, and the smarter drones figure out how best to fulfill it. As the cow is responsible for laying the eggs that keep the nest functioning, a drone always fights to the death to ensure his cow's safety.

Although cows never leave their chambers (and are therefore almost never encountered by other races), they are quite able to defend themselves. Lacking eyes, they can track prey through their sense of smell and attack with their enormous jaws, inflicting 3d6 points of damage. In addition, they exude a thick, white, corrosive liquid from their skin. This liquid coats their bloated bodies and the walls and floor of their chamber, and eats through metal or wood in a single round. If it comes into contact with living flesh, it inflicts 1d8 points of damage per round until washed off. All aspis are immune to the corrosive properties of this substance—in fact, if the nest is invaded, drones often coat their claws in the substance before attacking enemies, enabling them to inflict an extra 1d8 points of damage on the first successful attack.

In the event of the cow's death, the drones cut open her body and remove a chemical substance from her brain. This is then fed to one of the larvae; the substance causes a change of sex in the grub and stimulates rapid growth. Within a month, the grub achieves normal size for a cow and assumes the cow's place in the nest.

6. The aspis scent-language provides a great amount of information in a short period. Certain specific scents are used as "words," while others are modifiers, denoting the type of information being conveyed, the verb tense, and so on. Thus, a sentence like "The enemy is attacking!" would be conveyed by the "scent-words" for "enemy" and "attack," along with an overall modifying scent denoting present tense and another denoting urgency.

When an aspis learns a spoken language, it tries putting its words together in a similar fashion. Thus, a speaking aspis with a large enough vocabulary usually begins each sentence with the sentence type or the feeling behind the information about to be transmitted verbally, followed by the words of the sentence itself. For instance: "Query: What are you doing?" or "Statement of personal belief: You probably shouldn't be doing that" or "Overall feeling of contentment: That was a good meal."

7. Aspis are the epitome of the omnivorous creature, deriving nourishment from nearly any organic substance. Their digestive systems are very efficient, and they are not as squeamish about their meals as humans are (well, most humans, anyway). An aspis doesn't always bother killing its food before eating it—small insects, spiders, and worms are eaten alive. Even slain aspis drones are "recycled" by becoming food for the nest—if not the drones, then the larvae that swim in the grub hatcheries. The cow has her food brought to her in her chamber; she is not fussy about what she eats, so long as there is a lot of it.

Shortly after the sun went down, though, the human closed his eyes and lost consciousness. When the drones went to check on him, he started screaming and thrashing about. They backed off, afraid to hurt him, and he huddled in a ball and soon lost consciousness again. After a quick huddle, the drones decided to leave him alone for a while and see what would happen. He stirred and mumbled, tossed and turned, but eventually settled into one position and began making strange, rhythmic noises in his throat. Fortunately, when the sun came up and light filtered into the room, the human regained consciousness. The drones regarded it as a strange human trait, and they carried on with their lessons.[8]

The language learning started slowly, but gradually the drones built up a small vocabulary and learned to string words together. At first, they merely repeated everything that the human said, a trait that irritated the old woodcutter. Once he learned that they weren't going to harm him, though, that all they wanted from him was to learn to speak his language, things progressed more smoothly. In fact, Karl seemed to warm to the role of language teacher, as if realizing that the faster he finished the lessons over with, the sooner he'd be a free man. Indeed, he found himself growing oddly attached to the insect trio, for he sensed that they earnestly wished to expand their knowledge by learning to speak. He could respect that.

As for the drones, they were apt pupils. How could they not be? Their leader had told them to learn, so learn they did, devoting all of their attention to the task at hand.

After learning all of the words for parts of the body (both Karl's and the drones'), and the words for the objects in the learning chamber ("rock," "dirt," "shaft," "tunnel," "trap door," "bug," "human," "man," "Karl"—these last three causing some confusion for the drones, who didn't understand the concept of personal names and therefore used the three terms interchangeably[9]), the drones began bringing objects into the room and having Karl identify them. "That's an ax," he would say, and the drones would nod their heads sagely and repeat "Ax. Yes. That's an ax," or "That's an ax. I mean it."

After that began an intense series of pantomimes, wherein the old woodcutter tried to express certain concepts: "big," "small," "old," "young," "eat," "drink," "sleep," "hunt," and so on. The insects seemed intrigued by the game, often copying the gestures and maneuvers as well as the spoken words.

Finally, the drones led their human guest/captive/teacher on a tour of the nest. In the granaries, they learned the terms "mushroom," "mold," and "disgusting crap" but didn't fully understand the difference between them. Moving on to the egg chambers, they learned "egg," "baby," and "hatch," with Karl performing a pantomime to get the last two words across. As the drones repeated the words, a pair of giant ants entered the egg chamber. Feeling the eggs with their nimble antennae, the ants turned a few over and selected one of the biggest. Working together, they began dragging the egg down a narrow corridor to one of the grub hatcheries.[10]

Following the ants and their precious cargo into the hatchery, the drones inadvertently learned the words "vomit," "sick," and "stench," after quizzing Karl on his reactions to the room.[11] They quickly decided to move the tour to another chamber.

Still, all in all, progress was made, and finally the drones decided they had learned as much as they could under the conditions of the nest. One of the drones reported to the cow in her chambers.

"Statement of fact: Three drones have been taught to speak as much of the human language as is possible here in the nest."

"Feeling of contentment: Good. Command: Bring the human to me."

"Statement of undying obeisance: it will be done." The drone left, reappearing soon thereafter with Karl. They stood immediately outside the cow's chamber to prevent the acidic secretions from harming the human. Karl squinted in at the creature and said, "Cripes! She's as fat as a cow!"

"Statement of intention: I will question the human," said the cow in scent-language. "Command: You will translate."

To ensure a steady supply of food for the nest, mold growths are cultivated in several granaries in the nest. The granaries never lead to escape routes, so that they can remain in the darkness that promotes the growth of the mold.

8. Aspis do not sleep. They do rest, however, spending several hours at a time in a motionless state, conserving energy and purging fatigue poisons that build up in the body. Like all insects, aspis drones have no eyelids (larvae and cows don't even have eyes), so they remain aware of events in their fields of vision even while resting—although an aspis drone is more likely to detect someone approaching with his sense of smell or hearing than with his vision, which is somewhat poorer than that of a human. The multifaceted aspis eye was designed for detecting movement, so a Thief attempting to avoid detection by an aspis drone by using the Hide in Shadows ability and remaining motionless does so with a +10% bonus—provided he is out of "smelling range" of the aspis.

9. Aspis drones have no concept of individuality—a drone is a drone is a drone. They lack personal names and even distinct personalities. As far as the nest is concerned, a drone's life is immaterial, as any single drone is easily replaced by another.

Not all drones are identical, however. Within the nest, there are various functions that must be performed. While each drone must be able to perform any of the tasks required, some "specialize" in certain areas: defense of the nest, trap-building, speaking aloud to humans and humanoid creatures, scouting, tending to the mold cultures in the granaries or the grubs in the hatcheries, food gathering, and even breeding with the cow. A drone that has specialized in a particular task adopts a specific scent to identify its area of expertise; thus, "breeder" or "gatherer of food" serves as the closest equivalent a drone has to a name. Not all drones have such pseudo-names, however, and those names used aren't likely to be unique—a nest might have three "breeders" and seven "gatherers of food," for instance, any of which are interchangeable.

10. Many aspis nests include 1–10 giant ants (larger nests may have as many as 10–100). These insects are the spoils of war, stolen as eggs from a giant ant nest after a raid by aspis drones. Allowed to hatch in the aspis nest, the ants bond to the aspis cow, mistakenly believing her to be their own queen. Giant ants can understand simple scent-words of the aspis "language," enough to obey direct commands given by the cow. They do not enter her chamber, however, being vulnerable to the cow's acidic secretions. Giant ants are most often used as food gatherers, egg tenders, and warriors when the nest is attacked. Only workers and soldiers are found in an aspis nest, never a queen, requiring the aspis nest to steal giant ant eggs on a regular basis to resupply their stock of ant slaves.

11. Aspis larvae resemble giant maggots, white or pale pink. They are blind and deaf, lacking both eyes and ears at this stage of development. However, they already have a highly developed sense of smell and use this to find edible food in the waters of the hatcheries. Each aspis nest has up to six grub hatcheries, each one housing up to ten larvae. The hatcheries are shaped like a shallow swimming pool surrounded by a narrow ledge. Hatcheries double as garbage pits, in which the drones pitch food scraps and other waste products. The stench of these hatcheries is so bad that nonaspis (other than giant ant slaves) must make a successful saving throw vs. poison upon entering or become violently ill until removed from the odor. (Incidentally, the aspis ability to tolerate such stenches also makes them immune to *stinking cloud* and similar spells.)

Larvae have enormous appetites and eat almost constantly, growing in size over the course of three to

"Statement of comprehension: Understood."

"Query: Where did he get the weapon?"

The drone turned to Karl and said, 'Where did you get the ax?'"

"I bought it in the village."

"'Bought?' What is 'bought?'"

"I purchased it. With money. You know, coins?" The drone stared at the human in incomprehension. "I ... traded small bits of metal for it."

"What is 'village?'"

"Village, uh ... man-nest."

The drone switched back to scent-language. "Statement of partial confusion: He acquired it from his nest, by trading something of value in return."

"Query: Are there more of these weapons in his nest?"

"The cow speaks, 'Are more axes in the village?'"

"Yes."

"Statement of affirmation: Yes."

"Query: What will they accept as trade for the weapons? Explanation: Metal axes will allow the drones to better protect the nest."

After a moment's thought, the drone said, "The cow speaks, 'What things humans trade?' Bugs want axes bought for bug-nest."

"Beats me. You'd have to ask the blacksmith."

After a bit of further explanation, the drone passed, "Statement of possible understanding: The human is unsure and suggests we ask the question of the maker of weapons at his nest."

"Command: Go to the human nest and find out. Query: Would the human be of assistance in speaking to the others of his nest?"

"Statement of strong affirmation: Yes, my cow. Our grasp of the noise-language is not complete."

"Command: Then take him. The other two drones will remain here. If you are slain, I do not want to have to start all over. Now go."

"Statement of undying obeisance: It will be done, my cow." The drone turned to Karl. "We go to your village now."

"Praise be to the gods!" he said.

The bugs approached Karl, staring into his face with multifaceted eyes. "Con foundit. Let meego."

♈ ♈ ♈

Karl blinked at the sunlight, the first direct sunlight he had seen in over three weeks. Scrambling up behind him came the drone, rising to stand upright once he cleared the entrance of the aspis nest. "Lead bug to your village," he said.

"First, we stop at my cottage," Karl said. "I want a bath and a decent meal before I take you anywhere else." The drone had been given no time constraints by his cow, so he shrugged mentally and followed the woodcutter to his small dwelling in the woods.

"A 'cottage' is a small man-nest," he declared upon seeing it. "I understand. What is a 'bath'?"

"Wash with water. Remove dirt from body. Forget it."

The drone chalked it up as another odd human custom, like praying to unseen gods,[12] snoring, and the removal of liquid wastes from the body.[13] While

four months until they reach 6 feet in length. At that time, triggered by instinct, a larva crawls onto the hatchery ledge and begins to metamorphosize. Over the next few days, it grows into an adult drone, which bursts out of the maggotlike outer larval shell. The drone then kicks the remains of this husk into the pool and leaves the hatchery to serve the nest in his adult form. The larval husk is devoured by other aspis larvae still in the pool.

12. The aspis subscribe to no religion. They are practical-minded, finding it difficult to believe in something that cannot be seen, heard, or smelled. Cows and larvae care only about eating, and as for the drones, the cow is all the deity they need.

13. Waste material takes the form of small, white flakes that are shed from the aspis' abdomen. Their efficient digestive systems process all liquid intake (most of which is a by-product of the food they eat—

Karl went around to the rain barrel at the side of the cottage, the drone examined the interior of the man-nest.

There was little to see. A cot and blanket, a small table and chair, a wooden dresser—all items unfamiliar to the drone, who couldn't imagine what strange purposes they might serve. Mounted on the wall over the cot was a sword and a shield; these, at least, the drone recognized, for his nest had several such items, taken from slain enemies like the orcs and goblins who occasionally attacked drones gathering food in the forest. The cow, ever concerned about the well-being of the nest, desired many more such items.[14]

As the drone waited for Karl to finish his "bath," he studied the weapon and nibbled idly on the woodcutter's blanket.

♈ ♈ ♈

"Now, let me do the talking," suggested Karl, as they approached the village.

The village of Barker's Grove was a small one, claiming little more than a single inn, two taverns, a blacksmith's shop and a cluster of tiny houses. The blacksmith's was closed; expecting this, Karl advanced upon the nearest tavern. It was late afternoon, and the streets were clear, so the first to notice the arrival of the aspis was a donkey tied to the hitching post. It brayed in fear at the creature's unfamiliar scent; the drone got a good whiff of the donkey and altered his own odor to mimic that of the beast. Convinced the danger had passed, the donkey snorted once and was silent.

"Thought I'd find you here, Aegon," said the woodcutter poking his head in the door. "C'mon out here a minute. There's someone I want you to meet."

Aegon finished his ale in a single swig, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and climbed off his stool. He winked at his wife Daphnia, the tired-looking waitress who served drinks at the tavern. She ignored him and carried on with her business. *Whatever happened to us?* thought Aegon. *We used to be so close.*

The blacksmith stepped out into the open air, a ready retort on his lips. Instead, he took one look at the gray-white insect standing behind Karl, and his jaw dropped open.

"Aegon, I'd like you to meet … well shoot, I guess he doesn't really have a name."

"I am a bug," supplied the drone helpfully.

Aegon just stared.

"You are a Karl," added the drone.

"No, I'm Karl," said Karl. "He's Aegon."

"Ay-gon. Aegon. Aegon is a human. Karl is a human."

"Right."

"I am a bug."

"Look, I thought we agreed I'd do the talking," said Karl.

"What's all this about?" asked the blacksmith, voice shaky with shock.

"The bug here wants to buy some axes. Wants to know what you'd trade for them."

"Axes are … axes are a gold apiece. You know that."

"No, he doesn't want to buy. He wants to trade."

"Trade what?"

"Good question." Karl turned to the drone. "What would you be willing to give to Aegon in exchange for axes for your nest?"

The drone thought it over. "Food. We have many mushrooms and disgusting crap to spare."

"What the hell?" asked the blacksmith.

"Uh, forget it," replied Karl. To the drone, he asked "What else?"

"Goo."

"Goo?"

"White cow-goo."

Aegon looked questioningly at Karl. "They've got this white stuff that eats through flesh, wood, metal, you name it," the woodcutter explained.

"What would I do with that?" Aegon asked.

Karl frowned. "Hmm. What else?" he asked the drone.

"Slaves. We have many giant ants; we could trade some for your axes."

"And what would I want with a giant ant?"

"They are useful. They will care for your eggs, and help them hatch into fat babies. They are also good food."

"Uh, it doesn't quite work like that with humans," said Karl.

"No deal," said Aegon.

"We can make chemicals," suggested the drone.

"What kind of chemicals?" asked the blacksmith. "You mean, like potions?"

"'Potions?' What is 'potions'?"

"Magic," Karl explained. "You drink the potion and something magical happens. You know, like you can fly, or turn invisible, like that."

"Bugs do not know 'magic.' But we can make many chemicals.[15] We can make rats come or run away. We can make Karl vomit. We can make a creature smell like another creature. We can cause an attraction between two creatures. We can make—"

"Wait, hold it there a minute," said Aegon. "Cause an attraction between two creatures? You mean, like a love potion?"

The drone looked to Karl, hoping for an explanation. Karl ignored the aspis and spoke directly to the blacksmith. "You betcha," he said. "The bugs back at this guy's nest could whip up a potion that'd have the women falling at your feet."

Aegon rubbed his jaw. "Even Daphnia? You think it'd work on her?"

Karl grinned. "Looking to put the spark back in your marriage, eh, Aegon? Well, this love potion'll do the trick just fine—you'll be like newlyweds again. So whaddaya say? How many axes would that be worth to you?"

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an aspis very rarely needs to drink water).

14. Aspis technology is rather primitive. They are capable of making simple wicker or wooden shields and often carve spears and javelins from straight shafts of wood, but metalworking is unknown to them, and they scavenge or trade for their metal weapons.

15. Although the concept of magic is unknown to the aspis, they are adept at mixing natural concoctions that can simulate nearly any odor, even those not normally distinguished by humans at a conscious level. These "nonmagical potions" have a wide variety of effects. Some attract or repel certain types of animals; a favorite form of aspis vengeance against a town that has taken action against an aspis nest is to splash its walls with a sticky, yellow liquid that not only attracts giant rats and similar creatures but also drives them into a wild frenzy, causing them to attack everyone they encounter.

To create a compound that affects a specific type of creature, the drones must first have some type of contact with that creature. They couldn't create a formula of scent to keep wolverines at bay, for instance, unless they had been within "sniffing distance" of a

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"Ten."

"Not enough."

"Twenty."

"You're not being serious. Perhaps the bug and I need to take our business elsewhere. I'm sure there are smiths in the city that can spot a value when they see it; maybe we'd be better off doing our business there. Good day, Aegon."

"'City? What is 'city?'"

"Big man-nest. Bigger than a village."

"Wait!" called Aegon. "How many axes do you want?"

Karl called a quick conference with the drone. He had estimated about a dozen drones at the nest; the aspis confirmed fifteen. So, fifteen drones, each carrying two axes, plus some extras for the newer drones as the larvae hatched ... "Forty axes. No more and no less."

Aegon thought deep and hard. That was a lot of work; he didn't have forty axes back in his shop and he knew it. He looked back at the inn, and thought of his wife working within. To be like newlyweds again ... " Deal," he said.

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The drone reported back to the cow in the scent-language of their race. "Statement of unqualified success: I have arranged to receive forty axes from the humans at the man-nest."

"Query: What do they want in return?"

"Statement of bewilderment: A small quantity of what they term 'love potion.'"

"Query: Can we produce what they want?"

"Statement of affirmation: Yes, my cow. I have analyzed the human pheromones involved and can reproduce them in an appropriate elixir."

"Command: Assist one of the chemist-drones in such a preparation."

"Statement of undying obeisance: It will be done."

"Statement of satisfaction: Excellent. Command: After the compound has been made, exchange it for the weapons."

"Helpful input: I will require assistance to carry such a large load, my cow."

"Acknowledgment: You may take other drones to aid you."

"Statement of gratitude: Thank you, my cow."

"Command: After we have the weapons, you will leave the nest."

"Statement of bewilderment." The drone sent out scents of confusion and distress but could make no coherent scent-words to form a sentence. Had he offended the cow? Was he being exiled?

"Command: Calm yourself. Explanation: I have decided that access to the man-nests will benefit the nest. You will therefore go out into the world and explore. There might be other items available that will also be helpful. You will find them and return with them to the nest."

The drone found his scent-voice again. "Query: How long will I be gone?"

"Uncertainty: As long as it takes to find items of value. Clarification and return to certitude: In the meantime, we will begin trade with the man-nest on a regular basis. They may provide us with other metal items already known to us. We want shields, for instance. Annoyance: Enough explanations—go about your duties."

"Statement of undying obeisance: It will be done." As he left the cow's chamber, he could still smell the lingering words of their last conversation.[16] Would that prove to be the last time he spoke to his cow? It was possible—who knew what kinds of dangers awaited him, alone in a world he barely knew? Still, the cow was the cow, and he could not defy her orders. He made his way to the chemical preparation chamber and prepared himself mentally for the task ahead.

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The drone stood at the blacksmith's shop at Barker's Grove, watching as the Karl named Aegon counted out axes and placed them into the waiting hands of the three other drones that had accompanied him. Satisfied that all forty were accounted for, he passed over a vial of the chemical he had helped produce.

"Put some of this in food. Give food to partner."

Aegon rubbed his hands together in eagerness and accepted the flask. "It's been a pleasure doing business with you," he said, and sped off to the tavern.

The drone turned to his companions. "Command: Return to the nest and give the weapons to the cow."

"Query: Won't you be accompanying us?"

"Statement of negation: I have other orders."

"Acceptance: The cow must always be obeyed."

"Statement of agreement: The cow must be obeyed. Statement of sorrow: I will miss the nest."

The others turned and followed the dirt road leading out of Barker's Grove. As the drone watched his nest-brothers depart, he couldn't help but add, in the noise-language of the humans, "I mean it."

"C'mon, cheer up," said Karl. "It won't be so bad. You'll be back to your nest in no time, with a mess of stories to tell your little bug buddies. And in the meantime, there's a whole world out there for us to see and explore."

"You will accompany me?"

"You bet I will. I may not be the stalwart warrior I once was, but I can still swing a mean ax if I have to. And let me tell you, there's plenty for me to show you! Wait until you see the city—the big man-nest. The bakeries! The arenas! The marketplace! We can take a ride on a boat—you'd like that."

"And you will help me to learn the noise-language even better?" asked the drone.

"Sure I will," agreed Karl.

"Good. Then, what is 'business'? What is 'buddies'? What is 'stalwart'? What is 'bakery'? What is 'arena'? What is 'marketplace'? What is 'boat'?"

Karl sighed and shook his head as the they started down the road toward the city.

The following appendix provides rules on creating aspis Player Characters!

wolverine to capture its particular essence.

16. The scents that compose aspis "speech" remain in the air for a minute or two before dissipation. Thus, it is possible for a drone to enter a chamber and smell a recent conversation between others of its kind.

Appendix: The Aspis PC

For those players interested in a role-playing challenge, the aspis drone makes an intriguing PC. With the exception of the thri-kreen in the DARK SUN® world, insect PCs are virtually unheard of in the AD&D® game.

The aspis drone is described below in a slightly modified version of the format used in *The Complete Book of Humanoids*. In addition to the material presented in that work, an attempt has been made to include a list of possible kits for the aspis PC. These kits are from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* (PHBR1), *The Complete Thief's Handbook* (PHBR2), and *The Complete Book of Humanoids* (PHBR10). The kits listed are suggestions only; the DM is free to add or delete kits from the list for his individual campaign.

Ability Score Adjustments. Aspis PCs receive a +1 bonus to Constitution and a –1 penalty to Charisma.

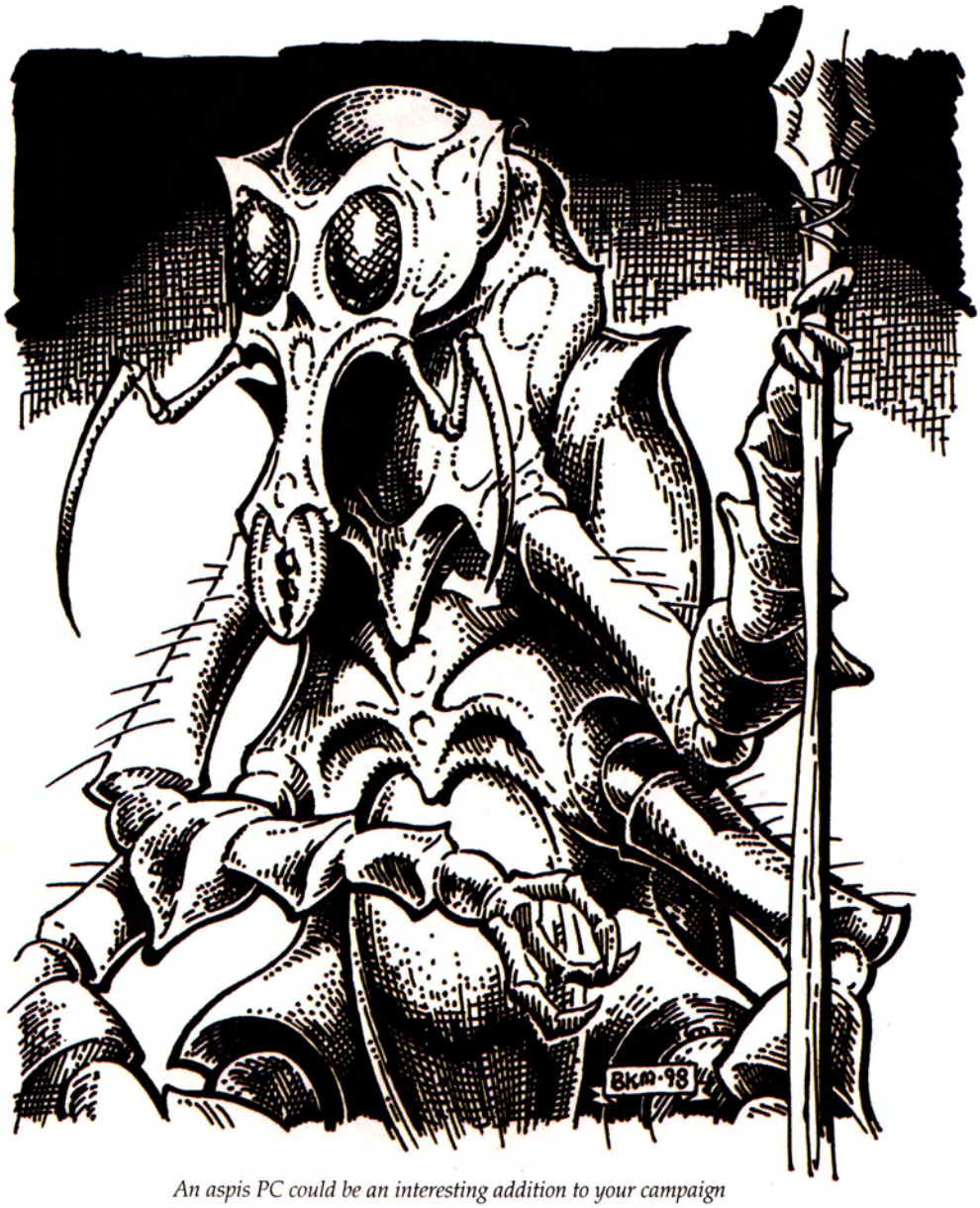
Ability Score Range

Ability	*Min.*	*Max.*
Strength	6	18
Dexterity	3	18
Constitution	8	19
Intelligence	13	18
Wisdom	3	18
Charisma	3	15

The standard aspis drone (as shown in MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® 5: *GREYHAWK® Adventures* Appendix) has an Intelligence rating of 11–12. It is therefore likely that only those with higher intelligence would be sent to explore the world around them. While aspis with Intelligence ratings lower than 13 certainly exist, only those with a 13 or higher are suitable for PCs. Similarly, while no ratings are provided by the entry in MC5, it is assumed that the tough, chitinous bodies of the drones require a Constitution score of at least 8. Finally, as most people find the concept of an intelligent, talking bug to be disturbing, aspis PCs can have no more than a 15 Charisma.

Class Restrictions

Class	**Maximum Level**
Warrior	
Fighter	12
Rogue	
Thief	10



An aspis PC could be an interesting addition to your campaign

Aspis are not adept at magic, as they do not understand it. They are too pragmatic to believe in gods and thus cannot receive Priest spells. Additionally, they have a hard enough time grasping the concept of a written language, let alone a written language that allows one to record magical spells. An aspis confronted with a Wizard spell on a scroll is more likely to eat it than attempt to have it deciphered.

Most aspis become Warriors, as fighting skills are something they readily understand. Thieving skills occasionally interest them enough to become members of the Rogue class, although they are more interested in useful skills like Find and Remove Traps than they are in learning how to steal items from others.

Thieving Skill Racial Adjustments: PP –15%, OL +10%, F/RT +5%, DN +10%, RL –10%. Their heightened senses allow aspis to Detect Noise more readily than humans. They have a slight advantage in finding and removing traps because of their familiarity with them; most aspis nests have numerous traps protecting their various entrances. These traps tend to be crude ones like rockfalls and pits, so the DM might only wish to grant the bonus to locating and removing such crude traps. Since aspis have no written language, they are also penalized in the reading languages ability. Aspis cannot climb vertical surfaces like many other insects do, but can certainly learn to climb walls as well as a human.

Class Mixing: Aspis PCs may choose to become Fighter/Thieves.

Suggested Kits: Aspis take their responsibilities to their nests seriously, but are exceedingly curious and always

Assume that your aspis PC has orders to explore the world around him.

eager to increase their understanding about the world around them. For this reason, aspis often take kits dealing either with exploration, the honing of a particular skill, or protection.

Warrior—Myrmidon, Savage, Wilderness Warrior (PHBR1); Tribal Defender, Mine Rowdie, Sellsword (PHBR10)

Thief—Adventurer, Scout (PHBR2); Scavenger, Tunnel Rat (PHBR10)

Hit Dice. Aspis PCs receive their hit dice by character class.

Alignment. Traditionally, aspis are Neutral. Aspis PCs may be of any alignment, but at least one component of their alignment should remain Neutral.

Natural Armor Class. The natural AC of an aspis is 3. This can be augmented with shields (an aspis can carry up to two shields) or magical protective devices, but aspis do not wear armor. An aspis with one or two shields lowers its Armor Class to 2.

Background. Aspis are completely subservient to their cows. An aspis PC is therefore assumed to be a drone with orders from his cow to explore the world around him and report back after a specified time. He has prepared for this mission by learning at least one "noise-language" common to the inhabitants in the immediate vicinity of the aspis nest, and arming himself with appropriate weapons. Naturally, all aspis PCs are drones and therefore male.

Languages. Aspis PCs begin play knowing the "scent-language" and one spoken language, usually the common tongue. It is assumed that the aspis drone learned the spoken language in a similar manner to the drone in the story above, but the player can determine how well his character can speak. (Often this decision is based on whether the player wishes to say things like "Enemy comes near" or prefers "Statement of extreme urgency: the enemy approaches!") Those players wishing to use the "scent-language" sentence structure when their aspis PCs speak the "noise-language" should examine **Table 1** for suggested aspis sentence modifiers.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Aspis PCs can be fun to play, if only because of their rarity. They have many traits that are unlikely to be found in other PC races.

For one thing, the scent-language of an aspis is based upon natural scents that the creatures emit under various circumstances. Thus, there is a "fear-smell," an odor of happiness and contentment, a scent denoting worry, and so on. These scents are easily picked up by other aspis, so an aspis cannot hide its true feelings from another member of its race. For this reason, the concept of lying is foreign to aspis. This leads to some interesting roleplaying situations: An aspis Thief successfully picks the pocket of a companion, and when the loss is noticed and the individual asks, "Hey, who took my gemstones?" the aspis pipes right up with "Statement of confession: I did." Over time, aspis characters might learn to keep silent or even lie in such situations, but they begin play blabbing the absolute truth when asked a question.

Similarly, until they grasp the concept of lying, aspis believe whatever is told them. A band of PCs who tell their aspis companion to guard their wagon on the outskirts of town while they go buy supplies might return to find the aspis standing alone, without the wagon. When asked what happened, he merely replies "Statement of fact: A stranger approached and said you had given the wagon to him."

Being in a female-dominated society, the aspis naturally believes that this is the norm in all societies. Aspis drones defer to female characters, often assuming a subservient role to them (and occa-

sionally calling them by the honorific "my cow," a title few females are likely to receive in the spirit in which it is intended). Again, this attitude may change as the aspis learns that other races have other attitudes and rules of behavior.

Special Advantages. Aspis PCs are immune to cold- and electricity-based attacks, and they suffer only half-damage from fire-based attacks. Since they have four arms when standing upright, aspis can attack with two weapons per round. They are immune to *stinking cloud* and similar spells, and they gain Blind-Fighting as a bonus nonweapon proficiency.

Special Disadvantages. Aspis PCs are seldom accepted as intelligent beings at first glance. They receive a reaction penalty of +4 to the dice roll on Table 59: Encounter Reactions (see the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*) when first encountering humans, demihumans, or humanoids. Additionally, aspis may not wear armor. Finally, in the interest of game balance, aspis PCs do not know the aspis "nonmagical potion" generation; it is assumed that aspis drones with such specialties are too important to be allowed to leave the nest for great lengths of time.

Weapon Proficiencies. The player chooses initial weapon proficiencies from the following list: Short Sword, Hand Ax, Light Crossbow, Javelin, Spear. Due to their body structures, aspis cannot use bows except crossbows.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. *General:* Animal Handling (giant ants), Animal Training (giant ants), Mining, Stonemasonry, Weather Sense (PHB); Danger Sense, Eating (PHBR10). *Warrior:* Animal Lore, Endurance, Set Snares, Survival, Tracking (PHB); Close-Quarter Fighting, Natural Fighting (PHBR10). *Rogue:* Juggling (PHB); Alertness, Herbalism, Intimidation, Observation (PHBR2).

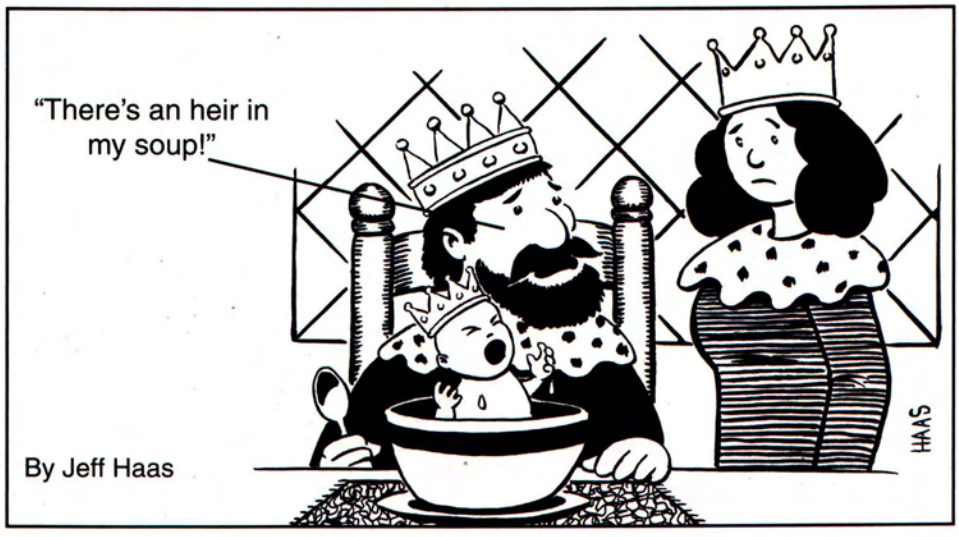
Statement of personal satisfaction: Johnathan M. Richards enjoys writing "Ecology" articles. Command: Look for more Ecologies from him in the future.

Table 1: Aspis Sentence Modifiers

Sentence Type	Standard Modifiers
Question	Query:
Command/Order	Command:
Passing along information	Statement of fact:
	Helpful input:
Passing along opinion	Statement of personal belief:
Agreeing with someone	Statement of (strong) affirmation:
	Statement of (strong) agreement:
	Acknowledgment:
	Acceptance:
Disagreeing with someone	Statement of (strong) negation:
	Statement of (strong) disagreement:
Kissing up to the cow	Statement of undying obeisance: (possibly also used when speaking to female superiors)
Explaining something	Statement of explanation:
	Explanation:
	Clarification:
	Statement of intention:
Unsure of one's self	Statement of bewilderment:
	Statement of partial confusion:
	Statement of possible understanding:
	Uncertainty:
Understanding	Statement of comprehension:
	Statement of certitude:
Thanking someone	Statement of gratitude:
Irritation	Statement of annoyance:
	Statement of irritation:
Contentment	Statement of (overall) contentment:
	Statement of (overall) satisfaction:
	Feeling of (overall) contentment:
	Feeling of (overall) satisfaction:
Pride	Statement of unqualified success:
Panic	Statement of (extreme) urgency:

Words in parentheses are used to differentiate between varying degrees of a specific feeling.

These are just some examples of aspis sentence modifiers. Players are encouraged to come up with others as their aspis PCs encounter strange and unusual situations in the world outside the nest.



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for the AD&D® game

Johnathan Richards' "Greater Drakes" article in this issue introduces six greater drakes, including the vandalraug and the retchenbeast. However, there are even more greater drakes yet to be discovered. Here's your chance to add a new drake to this growing pantheon of reptilian mounts!

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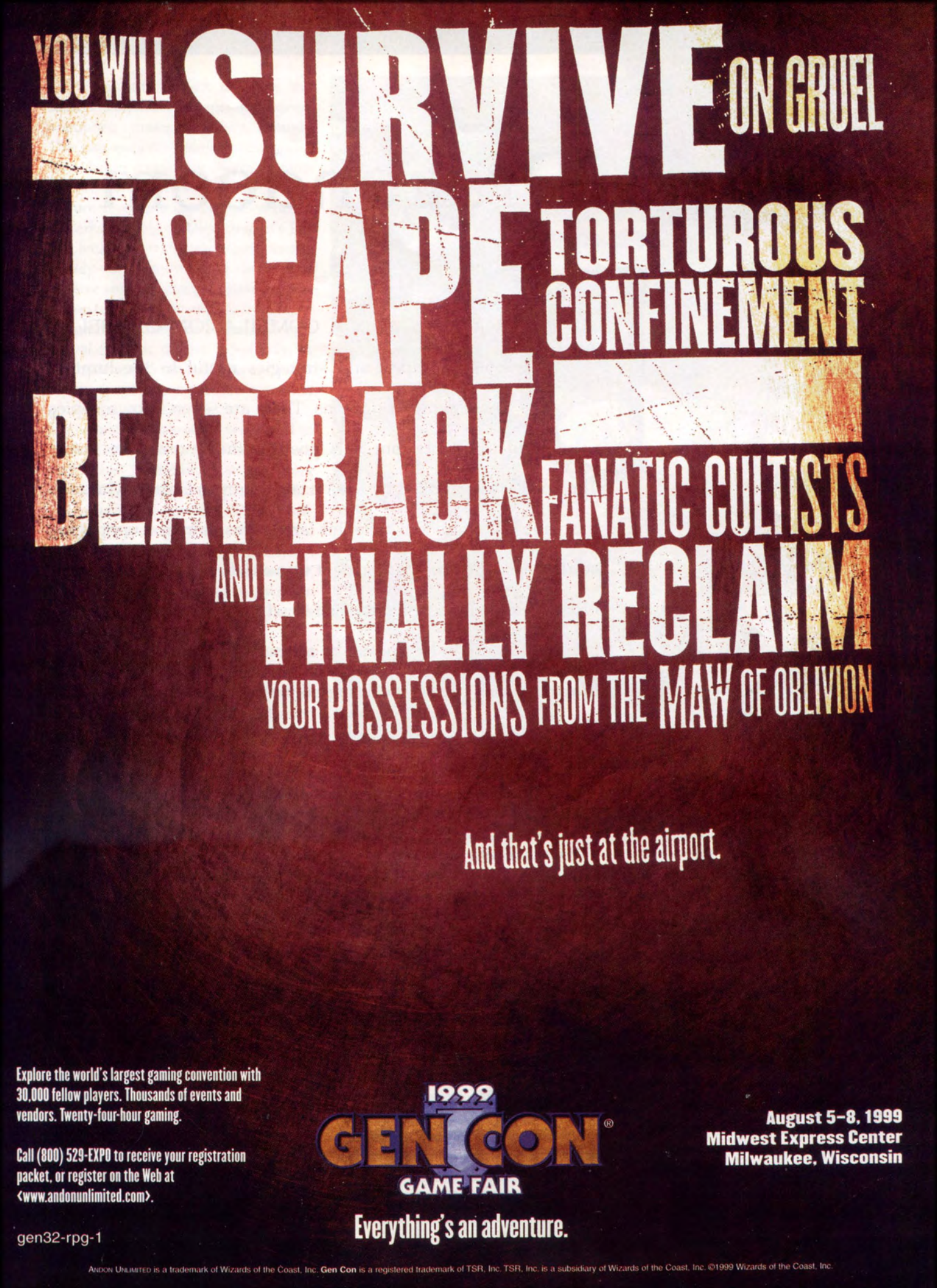
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Dragondoom

Not all dragonslayers wield a sword.

by
Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by
Bob Klasnich

DRAGONDOOM IS A COMPILATION OF SPELLS, potion recipes, and strategies useful in the hunting and slaying of dragons. There are seven known copies of this tome, but it is possible that more were made. The book was compiled by the Wizard Thurgas Dornn, who took the name "Dragondoom" after his family was slain by a rampaging adult green dragon. That incident was a defining one in Thurgas' life; thereafter, he devoted himself to wiping dragonkind from the face of the land. In his hatred, he refused to differentiate between dragon species, considering dragonkind as a whole inherently evil. He is known to have killed both a young adult silver dragon and a mature adult brass dragon along with several chromatic dragons over the course of his career.

As dragonslaying became the focus of his existence, Thurgas devoted much of his time researching and developing spells designed to aid him in his quest. The formulae for these spells are recorded in his life's work, the spellbook *Dragondoom*, along with other spells he found to be useful.

Of the seven spellbooks known to exist, only two of them have the same appearance. All seven are written on irregularly shaped parchment, made to conform to the shape of a pair of dragon scales, which serve as the front and back covers. The two identical copies of *Dragondoom* were made using the ventral belly-scales of a green dragon. (This reinforces the belief that Thurgas held animosity for green dragons above all others, no doubt since a green dragon was responsible for the death of his family.) Of the other five copies, one was made of red dragon scales, one of black dragon scales, one of the dorsal ridge-scales of a silver dragon, one of brown dragon scales, and the last from the bony head-ridge scales of a yellow dragon.

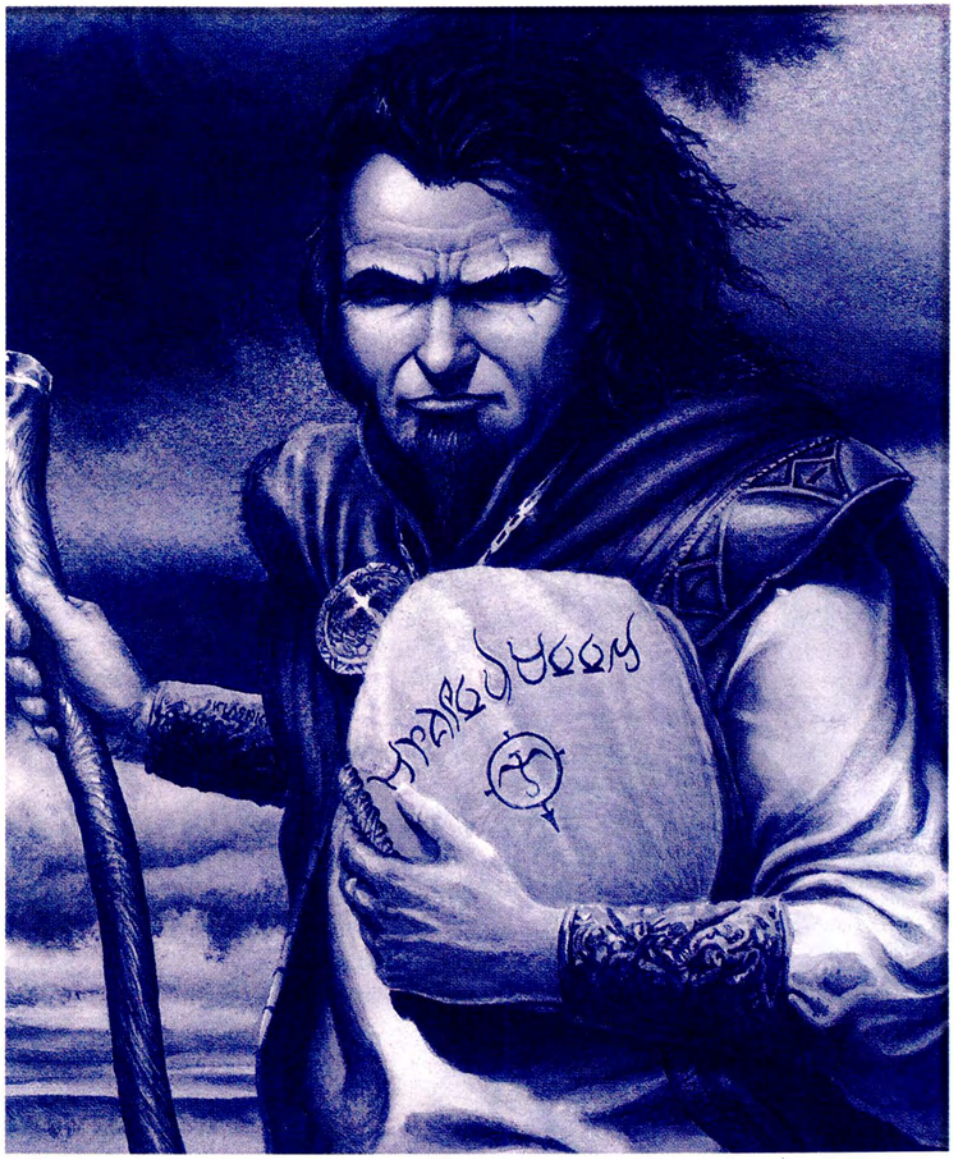
Other than the color and shape of the spellbooks' covers, the seven copies of *Dragondoom* are nearly identical. Each bears the legend "Dragondoom" and Thurgas' personal sigil etched into the scale with acid and colored with a contrasting pigment (black in all cases save the copy made of black dragon scales, which uses red pigmentation, and the copy made of brown dragon scales, which uses yellow).

The contents of each copy are the same. The first several pages detail dragonhunting strategies; oddly enough, Thurgas suggests extensive reconnaissance before engaging a dragon in combat. (Given Thurgas' history, many picture him as a crazed, bloodthirsty berserker storming into a dragon's lair and letting fly with attack spells immediately—apparently, he was much more pensive and calculating.) Following that are several pages devoted to the proper recipes for the various *potions of dragon control* (specific dragon types only, as Thurgas never learned the formulae for *potions of evil dragon control* or *potions of good dragon control).*

The rest of *Dragondoom* is devoted to spells. The following spells are included: *dust shield*, protection from evil; detect invisibility, filter* (from the *Complete Wizard's Handbook); chain invisibility*, fizzle-breath*, fly, protection from evil 10' radius; body reunion*, charm monster, lockjaw*, soften scales*; earth magnet*, hold monster, temporary youth.** Spells denoted with an asterisk (*) were developed by Thurgas and are detailed below.

Wizards should realize that casting a spell specifically designed to affect dragons often has the unwelcome side effect of drawing the dragon's attention directly to the Wizard. While a spellcaster might drool at the thought of casting spell after spell upon a hapless dragon, stripping the great beast of many of his abilities, one by one, in practice this is seldom the case. Usually, the first dragon-specific attack spell cast is also the last one before the dragon turns upon the offending Wizard.

Note also that openly carrying a copy of *Dragondoom* is not likely to win a Wizard many friends among dragon-kind. Even Good-aligned dragons tend to take a dim view of human or demihuman Wizards possessing spells specifically designed to cause them harm. Most dragons would willingly destroy the spellbook rather than let the spells contained therein become common in usage; copies of the work are therefore unlikely to be found among a dragon's many treasures. Knowledge of Thurgas' tomes has reached the ears of many a powerful dragon, so once word gets out that a Wizard has unearthed a copy of *Dragondoom*, he may find himself under repeated draconic attack as they attempt to rid the world of a dangerous work. Possession of *Dragondoom* is therefore a two-edged sword.



Dust Shield

(Invocation/Evocation)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

Dust shield is a variation on the 1st-level Wizard spell, *shield*. Instead of a shield-shaped force, the *dust shield* totally surrounds the spellcaster at a radius of about 1 foot and moves with him. Within that area, dust, dirt, and sand particles are deflected from the caster. Thus, the Wizard has no fear of being blinded or choked from sandstorms, dust storms, or the dust cloud formed by a dragon's stall maneuver. (See the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book for details on the dragon's ability to stall while in flight.) *Dust shield* also grants the spellcaster protection from the breath weapon of yellow dragons, allowing the caster to suffer only half damage or, upon a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon, only one-quarter damage. In either event, the caster cannot be blinded by the breath weapon.

Note that the *dust shield* also makes the Wizard immune to the effects, whether good or bad, of magical dust. (While he won't choke on the contents of a packet of *dust of sneezing and choking*, neither will he turn invisible as a result of the use of a packet of *dust of disappearance*.) The *dust shield* does nothing to keep out missile weapons or gas.

Chain Invisibility

(Illusion/Phantasm)
Level: 3
Range: 20 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 30 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 10' cube/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell is used primarily as a distraction in battle. When cast, a number of individual, nonliving items are made invisible in sequence. Dragonslayers inevitably use *chain invisibility* on the individual components of a dragon's treasure hoard, causing them to apparently disappear. In fact, they merely become temporarily invisible, but the effect is very disconcerting to a hoard-greedy dragon.

The *chain invisibility* spell only works when cast upon a pile of loose, stationary objects—it cannot be used to turn a party of adventurers invisible. (The spell has no effect upon living creatures in any case.) As far as illusions go, this one is rather convincing—instead of the entire treasure pile vanishing all at once, the individual items wink away one at a time, and the effect spreads quickly like a runaway virus.

Even a dragon in the heat of battle might become distracted by the disappearance of its precious treasure hoard. Depending upon the individual (and the DM's assessment), the dragon might automatically lose initiative for a few rounds, turn its back on its attackers in an attempt to save its treasure, or attack everyone in sight in a berserker fury.

Of course, dragons are able to disbelieve the illusion. Intelligent dragons might even ignore it and worry about it later, after the attacking party has been dealt with. A dragon attempting to disbelieve the *chain invisibility* makes an Intelligence check with success indicating he realizes that his treasure is still there. (The check is made with a +2 bonus if he takes the time to check on his treasure—while invisible, it can still be felt if touched.) Disbelieving the spell takes an entire round, during which time the dragon's opponents can attack it without retaliation.

Chain invisibility has other uses beyond distracting dragons in battle. Casting the spell on a pile of dry leaves strewn upon a floor creates a simple alarm system: Anyone trying to sneak into the room during the spell's duration causes the invisible leaves to crunch noisily unless the intruder can detect invisible objects. Casting the spell on a pile of caltrops, nails, or broken glass provides an even bigger surprise for anyone unknowingly treading into the area.

The material component for this spell is an eyelash encased in gum arabic, the same as for the spells *invisibility* and *invisibility 10' radius*.

Fizzlebreath

(Alteration)
Level: 3
Range: 10'/level
Components: V, S
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Special

The *fizzlebreath* spell was specifically designed to combat creatures with breath weapons. It affects a single creature with each casting of the spell. There is no initial saving throw; the next time the creature attempts to use its breath weapon, nothing happens (it "fizzles"). Note that the target creature has no advance notice that there's something "wrong" with its breath weapon—it first learns of the spell's effect when its breath weapon fails. However, the creature can attempt to use its breath weapon on subsequent rounds; fizzled breath weapon attacks don't count as a use of the breath weapon. For each attempted use of its breath weapon after the initial one, the creature can make a successful saving throw vs. spell to determine whether the breath weapon works. The first save is made normally, and subsequent saves are made at a cumulative +1 until a save is successful, at which time the *fizzlebreath* spell is broken.

Fizzlebreath spells are not cumulative; multiple castings of the spell are ineffective against a single target. Only when the original *fizzlebreath* has been broken by a successful use of the breath weapon is the creature vulnerable to further castings of the spell.

The purpose of *fizzlebreath* is to give dragonslayers a chance to do some heavy damage to the dragon before it brings its most powerful weapon into play. Although designed for use against dragons, the spell works equally well on winter wolves, hell hounds, fire toads, and the like.

Body Reunion

(Greater Divination)
Level: 4
Range: 10 miles/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: One body part
Saving Throw: None

Body reunion must be cast upon a piece of an individual's body that is no longer connected to that individual (for instance, a lock of hair, a dismembered hand, or, most common for dragon hunters, a dragon's scale). At the end of the lengthy spell ritual, the body part hovers off the ground at a height of 3 feet and travels at a movement rate of 6 in the direction of the individual from whose body the part was taken (provided the individual is within the spell's range at the time of the casting—if not, the spell fails). *Body reunion* was designed to track a dragon to its lair, but the spell works equally well to track any creature to its present location. It can be particularly useful in tracking a kidnapped victim; many people who fear such an occurrence (ambassadors to hostile countries, the relatives of nobles or royalty) keep a lock of hair in the safe keeping of a trusted Wizard, just in case.

There are a few limitations to the spell. It cannot track a creature to a different plane of existence. Once activated, the body part moves at a constant rate of speed in a straight line toward its target, regardless of terrain but avoiding obstacles. It is up to the Wizard and his party to keep the body part in sight. (Having a magical means of flight is useful, especially when the body part floats over rivers or up steep slopes.) Once set upon its magical journey, the floating body part doesn't stop until it reaches its target or the magic is dispelled, so keeping up may be difficult on long journeys. Finally, whether the Wizard manages to

keep up with the floating body part or not, when it finally reaches its goal (the creature from which it was taken), it burns up in a flash of magical flame. The flame inflicts no damage and cannot start a normal fire, but it does announce to the target creature that something is up, often giving the creature plenty of advance notice if the Wizard hasn't been able to keep up.

The only material component for the *body reunion* spell is the severed body piece itself, which is eventually consumed at the end of the spell.

Lockjaw

(Alteration, Necromancy)
Level: 4
Range: 10'/level
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Negates

The *lockjaw* spell must target a single opponent. If successful, the victim's mouth is magically clamped shut for the duration of the spell, preventing the victim from speaking aloud, casting spells that require verbal components, biting, or anything else requiring the mobility of the jaws. While developed specifically for use against dragons, it is equally useful against enemy spellcasters, being similar in use to the 2nd-level Priest spell *silence 15' radius*.

If the spell is cast upon a dragon, its breath weapon might be rendered useless while the spell is in effect. While all dragons' breath weapons normally emanate from the mouth, some (primarily gas and fire-based attacks) can be used just as effectively when projected through the dragon's nostrils. Regardless of the breath weapon type, if the dragon fails its saving throw it is unable to bite opponents and cast spells of its own, as dragon spells are all verbal. Those disadvantages alone may be enough to turn the tide of battle against the dragon.

A dragon under the effects of a *lockjaw* spell can be subjected to a *fizzlebreath* spell. (This is especially useful when the dragon is still able to use its breath weapon through its nostrils.) Similarly, a dragon trying to break the effects of a *fizzlebreath* can be subjected to a *lockjaw*. These two spells can be used together as a "one-two punch," depriving a draconic opponent of its most powerful weapons.

Obviously, the *lockjaw* spell is of great use against creatures whose only method of attack is a bite (such as wild dogs, poisonous snakes, or giant toads). The spell affects only one head per caster level when cast on multi-headed creatures such as hydrae, chimerae, or amphisbaena. It is useless against creatures without jaws—puddings, oozes, slimes, jellies, fungus, intellect devourers, and the like. It is similarly ineffective against all forms of undead (including dracoliches).

Soften Scales

(Alteration)
Level: 4
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1' × 1' patch of skin/level
Saving Throw: None

The *soften scales* spell causes an area on a dragon or other reptilian (or piscine) creature's body to become soft and pliant. The creature must be touched by the Wizard (requiring a successful attack roll in combat) to activate the spell; once activated, the touched area becomes slightly discolored. For the duration of the spell, that area of the creature's body loses 6

points of Armor Class (never worse than AC 10)—thus, an adult red dragon with AC –5 under the effects of a *soften scales* spell has a patch of skin with only AC 1.

The scale discoloration caused by the spell allows the creature's "weak spot" to be targeted by means of a called shot; see the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* for details on called shots. Since high-level Wizards can cause rather large patches of softened scales, the "to hit" penalty of the called shot is reduced to –3 when the spell is cast by a 10th-level Wizard, –2 for a 15th-level Wizard, and –1 for a 20th-level Wizard. Regardless of the softened area's size, the called shot is never made at less than –1 to hit, no matter how many levels of experience the Wizard has. In addition, the softened area may not be accessible to some attacks—for instance, if the soft area is on the top of the dragon's head, a Barbarian armed only with a broadsword is unable to take advantage of the dragon's weakness if the creature is rearing up on its hind legs.

Obviously, the *soften scales* spell only works on reptilian or piscine creatures (or partially reptilian/piscine creatures, like lamia nobles or mermen) that have scales. The material component for the spell is the sloughed-off skin of a snake, which is consumed in the casting of the spell. A single creature can be affected simultaneously by multiple castings of the spell, although the areas of softened scales cannot overlap. (That is, the scales already softened by one application of the spell cannot be softened further by another use of the spell.)

Earth Magnet

(Alteration)
Level: 5
Range: 10'/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: See below

The *earth magnet* spell creates an increasing attraction, almost magnetic in nature, between the target of the spell and the ground immediately below it. If cast upon a creature on the ground, its movement rate is slowed by 6 each round until it reaches 0, at which time the victim is fixed in place, unable to lift any limbs from the ground. Once this occurs, the victim spends the rest of the *earth magnet* spell's duration under the effects of a *slow* spell. It can physically attack only with appendages not touching the ground. (A troll could still use its two claws and its teeth against anyone within range; a dragon could still bite, use its breath weapon, or cast spells, but couldn't use its claws or tail to attack.)

If cast upon a creature in flight, the creature loses one Maneuverability Class per round as it is pulled to the ground at half its flight speed (if it struggles against the spell) or at twice normal speed (if it does not try to resist, or was already diving toward the ground when the *earth magnet* was first cast). Diving creatures forced to crash-land suffer falling damage as normal.

Only potential victims in flight are allowed a saving throw at the beginning of the *earth magnet* spell, due to their initial distance from the ground. Once the spell takes effect, though, there is no further saving throw, and the victim must "ride out" the duration of the spell, which lasts for one round per level of the Wizard (a *dispel magic* cast upon the victim cancels out the *earth magnet*). The spell is often used to either force dragons to the ground or to prevent them from taking to the air once battle has begun.

The *earth magnet* spell is useless against beings from the elemental plane of Earth (xorn, xaren, etc.). It is particularly effective against creatures who crawl on the ground—snakes, giant worms, and the like—as it usually pins them, preventing all attacks. The spell requires a small magnet and either a clump of dirt or a handful of pebbles. All material components are consumed during the casting of the spell.

Temporary Youth

(Alteration, Necromancy)
Level: 5
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level of caster
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Negates

The *temporary youth* spell can be targeted only against a single creature. If the saving throw fails (it can be voluntarily failed if the spell's recipient wishes to be affected), the targeted creature is restored in age by one age category. For the purposes of PC races, the age categories are: infant, youth, adult, middle age, old age, and venerable. (Infants are non-combatants; youth and adult are the norm for most PCs; see Table 12: Aging Effects in the *Player's Handbook* for attribute changes in the three oldest categories.) Other creatures, like dragons, greater mummies, and giants, have separate age categories. (Many giant races, when young, cause damage as a lesser creature; young cloud giants, for instance, attack as fire giants.) *Temporary youth* causes a temporary "regression" of one step to the damage such creatures inflict. For a dragon, this means that its combat modifier and breath weapon damage are lessened (see the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* book and individual dragon entries). Other attributes, such as Hit Dice and armor class, are not affected.

When the *temporary youth* spell is used against a creature that doesn't have specified age categories (like a tiger), reduce the damage of the creature's attacks by 1 point (for d4 and d6) or 2 points (d8 and above) per damage die (dropping the tiger's 2–5/2–5/1–10 damage potential to 1–4/1–4/1–8). Each damage die inflicts a minimum of one point of damage.

The *temporary youth* spell can be beneficial to its recipient, temporarily reversing the effects of aging attacks like those that result from seeing a ghost. The spell recipient's memory and mental capacities are not affected by the spell. Multiple castings of *temporary youth* cannot be used simultaneously on a single target, nor can the spell be used on a creature already at the youngest age category. (The spell automatically fails in such attempts.) Upon expiration of the spell's duration (or if a *dispel magic* is cast upon the spell recipient), the creature returns to its original age. The *temporary youth* spell cannot be made permanent.

Johnathan M. Richards has become something of a dragon hunter himself these past few years: His back-issue collection of DRAGON Magazines *now spans from issue #67 to the present.*

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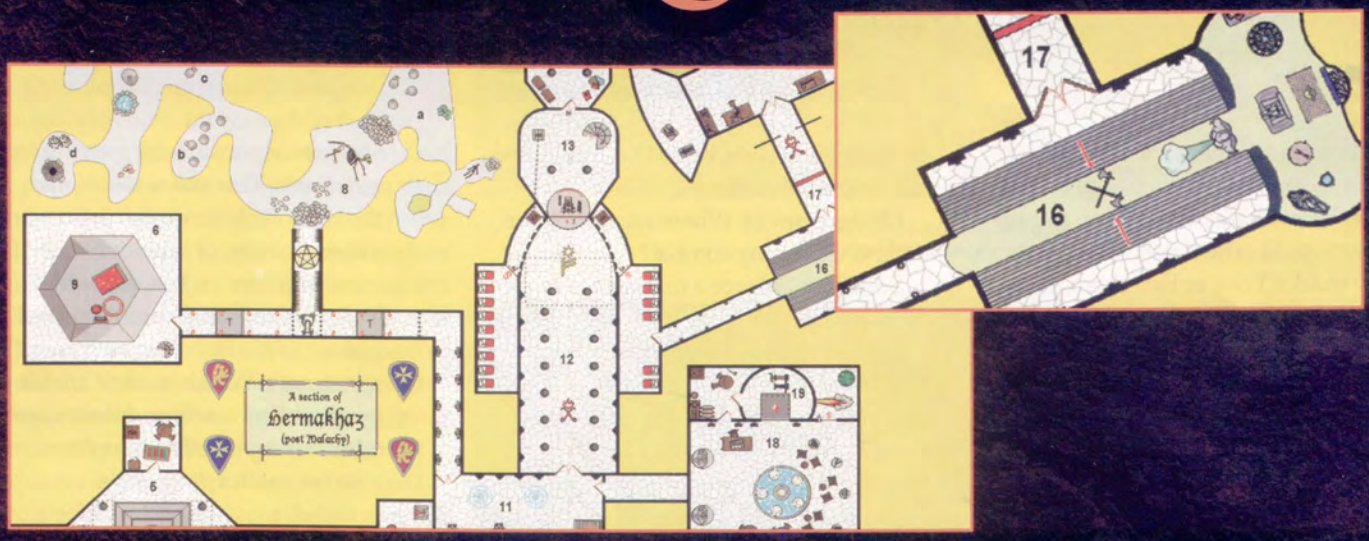

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Role Models

Problem Solving with Miniatures

By Jim Bishop and J.D. Wiker

photography by Craig Cudnohufsky

At the gaming table, they're as ubiquitous as Crown Royal dice bags and *Player's Handbooks*, as common to gaming groups as caffeinated beverages and salty snacks. Love or hate them, player-DM disagreements are part of the AD&D® game experience.

Rather than point fingers at players or DMs, this article aims to make the game more fun and fair by reducing conflict. Here are examples of some common disagreements and ways that miniatures can help resolve them.

Disagreement: Where are characters and NPCs during combat?

Solution: Enforce a miniatures movement phase.

If you ask the player, Hargath the Magnificent can be in two places at once. When confronted with a sealed door, Hargath is the first to rush in to knock it down. But when giant cobras begin spitting venom at the intruders, the player complains that Hargath was hiding behind the doorframe. "It's how he opens doors," the player explains.

Confused location is not just a player problem. DMs can be hazy about encounter distances too, leaving players angry (and rightly so) when the gnolls they thought were 100 meters away are actually 100 feet away and charging!

How do you solve the problem without either side caving in? The DM should enforce a movement phase when both sides are responsible for moving their miniatures. This phase takes place when the sides declare combat actions, and proceed in order of initiative rolls. If miniatures aren't moved on the battle mat, characters and NPCs aren't moved in the game.

Disagreement: Which models are targeted by area effect spells and weapons?

Solution: Use spell effect templates.

Despite his spellcasting skills, Zorgo's *fireball* toasts friend and foe alike if he casts it into a melee, yet many players feel that area effect weapons target only enemy figures. This problem is aggravated when the DM fails to describe a complex combat in clear, accurate terms, or when he changes a description in the middle of combat to foil a player's spell.

Templates are an excellent way to determine spell areas without slowing combat with tedious calculations and measurements. Make templates for just a few common spells—*fireball* (20' radius) and *cloudkill* (40' × 20' × 20'

Painting Faces

Nothing intimidates a beginning painter like faces. As the most recognizable part of a humanoid figure, it's the hardest to paint right and the most prone to scrutiny. With just a little practice at this technique, however, anyone can do it well.

If the figure is already basecoated in white, paint the head black. Next, paint just the raised areas of the face: the cheekbones, jaw, forehead, nose, and lips. The secret is not to use too much paint—a little bit will do. Add a lighter tint of the flesh tone to the higher areas of the face to show highlighting, then wash the whole face with a very light brown wash (mix with extra water).

Finally, repeat the process with flesh tone and lighter tint, but leave a small area around the patches of flesh to create four areas of skin tone: black, dark brown, flesh, and highlighted flesh, which provide a realistic finished effect.

The secret to painting faces is not to use too much paint in each layer.

cloud) are obvious choices—and use them on the battle mat to determine exactly which models are affected.

If a model is only partially covered, it might receive a positive saving throw modifier, at the DM's discretion.

The templates themselves can be made from cardboard, foam core, formica, or any other durable material and should be made to the same scale as the rest of the combat (5 feet per inch is standard).

Disagreement: Which models are within range and line of sight of missile weapons?

Solution: Use a range string.

Questions about missile weapon ranges are common enough to make a range string useful as a reference, especially since it can also end arguments about line of sight.

Mark the short ranges of common missile weapons on a piece of string. Use different colored pens for the different weapons to tell them apart quickly. In combat, simply use the string to determine whether a target is in short range instead of counting squares or figuring range conversions from yards to feet.

To settle a question of line of sight, fix one end of the string at the firing model and try to connect it with the target. If the string is bent, the target is obstructed. If it passes directly through an intervening obstacle, the target is not visible.

A Party Divided
(Simple Scenario with Miniatures)

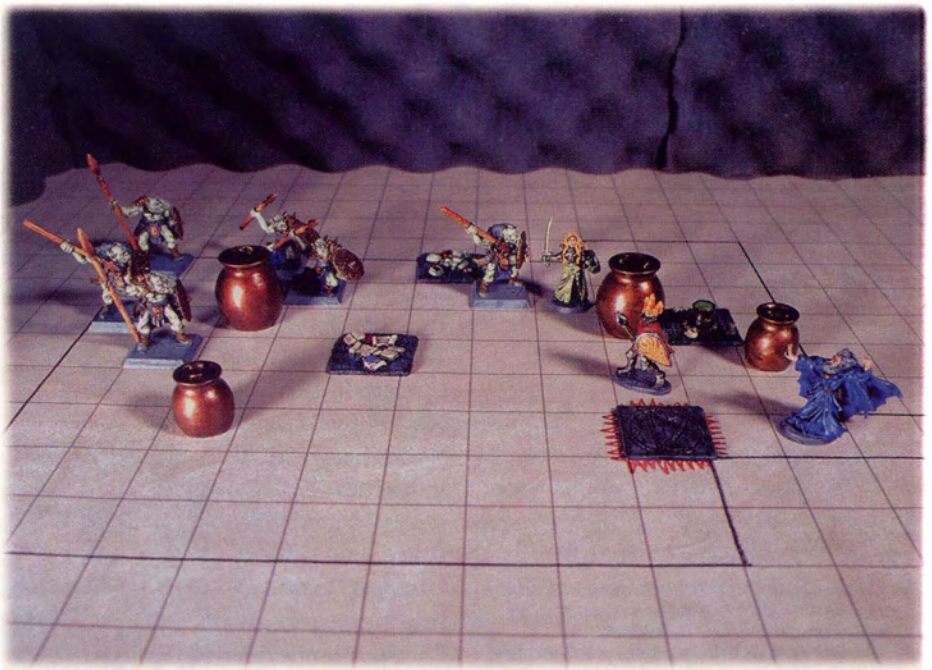
As the party explores a dungeon level, they are surprised by a group of orcs. The orcs take up their position behind a low wall for cover, then attack with bows. When the PCs run for cover behind nearby pillars, some of them vanish!

Behind the scenes: Several squares in the room are teleporters, pre-programmed to transport creatures into a special room deep in the dungeon. The DM must keep track of which squares are teleporters and set up another battle mat to represent this second room.

The second room also has teleporters that return creatures to the first room. Players whose characters were teleported in will want to find these quickly, since the second room also contains a large, hungry monster!

Note that the teleporters activate for anyone or anything, so if the orcs or the large, hungry monster happen to step on one, combatants in the other room are in for a big surprise.

Kindhearted DMs might want to include an on/off switch for the teleporters, although this trick might create more trouble for the party as it struggles to get everyone in one room before turning off the effect. Characters could end up stuck in a different room from the rest of the party, which could be 20 feet or 20 miles away!



First, arrow fire from the attacking orcs drives the PCs to take cover behind the pillars.

Then, *teleported* PCs find themselves in the lair of a hungry monster!

JD Wiker and Jim Bishop sometimes wish the Wizards of the Coast offices had convenient teleporters, but only if they don't come with ravenous monsters.

Convention Calendar

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
✳ Canadian convention
● European convention
💻 Online convention

June

Milwaukee Summer Revel III

June 10–13 **WI**
The Best Western Inn, Milwaukee, WI.
Contact: Bruce Rabe, P.O. Box 779, New Munster, WI 53152.
Website: www.rli-net.net/~melka/msr/index.htm

July

UK Games Fest

July 3 ●
The Sportcentre, Harlow, Essex, UK.
Contact: Jan Eldridge, The Dashes, Harlow, Essex CM20 3RZ.
Email: uk_games.fest@virgin.net

ManaFest '99

July 9–11 **CA**
South San Francisco Conference Center, South San Francisco, CA.
Contact: ManaFest, P.O. Box 170436, San Francisco, CA 94080.
Website: www.manafest.com
Email: info@manafest.com

GrailQuest

July 16–17 **FL**
The Fat Kat Lounge, 1193 Edgewood Avenue, Jacksonville, FL.
Contact: Sanctuary Games and Books, 1200 Edgewood Avenue, Jacksonville, FL 32205.
Email: jjacobs7@bellsouth.net

August

DotCon

August 7–September 7 💻
Online Convention.
Website: www.bdominia.com
Email: talaysen@mailplanet.net

Bubonicon 31

August 20–22 **NM**
Howard Johnson East, Albuquerque, NM.
Contact: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176.
Website: members.aol.com/bubonicon
Email: cwcraig@nmia.com

September

CogCon

September 26–28 **NM**
University Center-East, Rolla, MO.
Contact: CogCon, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla, MO 65402.
Website: www.rollanet.org/~cogcon
Email: cogcon@rollanet.org

By Joe Pillsbury

PC Portraits

Dragonslayers

by Pete Venters

"What's the common factor among dragonslayers?" asks Pete Venters. "Certainly not race or gender. It has to be a motive. But surely you'd have to be crazy to hunt dragons. Well, either that or naive, vengeful, or desperately in need of a spell component. Any guesses which trait each portrait fits?"

Zero Point Players

Heroes and Villains of the STAR*DRIVE® Setting

by Richard Baker

illustrated by L.A. Williams

Zero Point is the story of two characters—Pete Sokolov and Geille Monashi. He's a ruthless bounty hunter outfitted with military-grade cyberware. She's a top-flight computer engineer who scratched and clawed her way out of the dismal poverty and desperation of Penates' feudal gang kingdoms. Their paths cross when Monashi sabotages her own work at HelixTech, a sinister hi-tech corporation, and then flees Penates. Karcen Borun, a high-ranking HelixTech exec, hires Sokolov to bring her back.

Sokolov doesn't believe everything Borun has to say, but the money's right. He trails Monashi to the outlaw station Icewalk and abducts her from the hidden base. When Icewalk's overlord, a fraal pirate named Devriele Shanassin, pursues Sokolov, the bounty hunter punches a random starfall into his ship's nav computer to escape. Sokolov refuses to believe Geille's assertion that Borun might be lying to him about the whole scenario, and Geille is desperate enough to try anything to escape.

After five days of drivespace travel, the *Peregrine* returns to normal space thousands of light-hours from the nearest star. Here, Sokolov and Monashi stumble across an incredible discovery—a titanic alien derelict. They set aside their personal animosity to investigate the find; an intact ship from an unknown culture is a discovery of astonishing proportions, potentially worth millions to the right buyer.

When Sokolov returns Geille to HelixTech, he discovers that Karcen Borun is more interested in the story of their encounter than Monashi's return. Sokolov finds himself an unwilling guide in a HelixTech expedition to the derelict. Geille is pressed into service, too; they're now caught in the same trap. They must set aside their differences to keep one step ahead of Karcen Borun.

A bad situation becomes worse when Devrielle Shanassin appears on the scene, still on the trail of the bounty hunter. Shanassin sees an opportunity to seize a serious prize and wreak vengeance on Sokolov in the process, and he attacks at once. Then a Jamaican Syndicate warship shows up, summoned by a covert message Geille sent when Sokolov took her into HelixTech. Finally, all hell breaks loose when the Solar drivescout *Sirocco* tracks Shanassin to the derelict, too. Alliances of convenience form and fall apart as the four powers maneuver for the upper hand.

Meanwhile, Sokolov and Monashi must find a way to trust each other to escape with their lives. While the Solars, the Syndicate, HelixTech, and Shanassin battle for possession of the derelict, Sokolov and Monashi discover the ultimate secret of the derelict, a secret that harbors dire consequences for the humans battling over it.

The derelict isn't quite as dead as it looks.

And the owners aren't friendly.

Rich has been working as a game designer since 1991; he's still trying to figure out what he wants to do when he grows up.

Character-Building Tip

If you do the math on the following characters, you'll notice that their skill-point expenditures just don't add up. But they're really perfectly legal ALTERNITY® game characters. How can this be? Simple: the Teach skill.

Characters who learn some of their skills through any kind of education or training program (and that would be most of us!) receive the benefit of some supporting cast member using the Teach skill to make it easier for them to buy the skills they're learning. In general, a reasonably competent teacher in a good learning environment can, on average, reduce any skill purchase by 1 point, averaging out Good and Amazing success against Failures. It gets trickier for high skill ranks (rank 4 or better) since it's harder to find teachers who know the subject material better than the hero at that point. I've applied this shortcut for the four characters in this article by assuming that some of their skills were purchased with the assistance of a mentor, drill sergeant, attentive professor, etc.

Next time you want to create a competent supporting cast character, ask yourself what broad and specialty skills the character learned in college, boot camp, or from a mentor. Figure that each one is 1 point cheaper than it should be due to the mentoring of the character's teachers. You'll be surprised at how the numbers add up.

Don't forget achievement benefits! They can greatly increase an experienced character's action check score and actions per round for a pretty minimal cost in skill points.

Pete Sokolov

Level 15 human Tech Op

STR 11 (12*)	(+1)	INT 11	(+1)
DEX 12	(+1)	WIL 11	(+1)
CON 11	—	PER 9	—

Durability: 11/11/6
Action Check: 16+/15/7/3**
Movement: Sprint 22, run 14, walk 4
#Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Good/3
Last Resorts: 1

* +1 Strength with cybernetic arm.
** –3 step bonus with fast chip activated

Attacks***

Unarmed–*martial*	16/8/4	d6+1s/d6+3s/d4+1w	LI/O
Cyber-blade	15/7/3	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4+1m	LI/O
Sabot pistol	16/8/4	2d4w/2d4+1w/d4+3m	HI/O

*** Enhance programs add –2 step bonus when active.

Defenses

CF Softsuit: d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6–1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [12]–*climb* 2 [14], *throw* 2 [14]; Unarmed Attack [12]–*power martial arts* 4 [16]; Acrobatics [12]–*daredevil* [13], *zero-G training* [13]; Modern Ranged Weapon [12]–*pistol* 4 [16], *rifle* 2 [14]; Vehicle Operation [12]–*land* [13], *spacecraft* 2 [14]; Stamina [11]–*endurance* [12]; Computer Science [11]–*hacking* 4 [15], *hardware* 2 [13], *programming* [12]; Knowledge [11]–*computer operation* 4 [15], *first aid* [12], *area: Nariac Domain* 3 [14], *language: Narislavic* 3 [14], *language: Standard* 3 [14]; Navigation [11]–*drivespace astrogation* 2 [13], *system astrogation* 2 [13]; Security [11]–*security devices* 2 [13], *protection protocols* [13]; System Operation [11]–*sensors* 2 [13], *weapons* 2 [13], *engineering* [12]; Awareness [11]–*perception* [12]; Investigate [11]–*interrogate* [12], *track* [12]; *Street Smarts* [11]–*criminal elements* 2 [13]; Deception [9]–*bluff* [10]; Interaction [9]–*bargain* [10], *intimidate* [10].

Rank Benefits

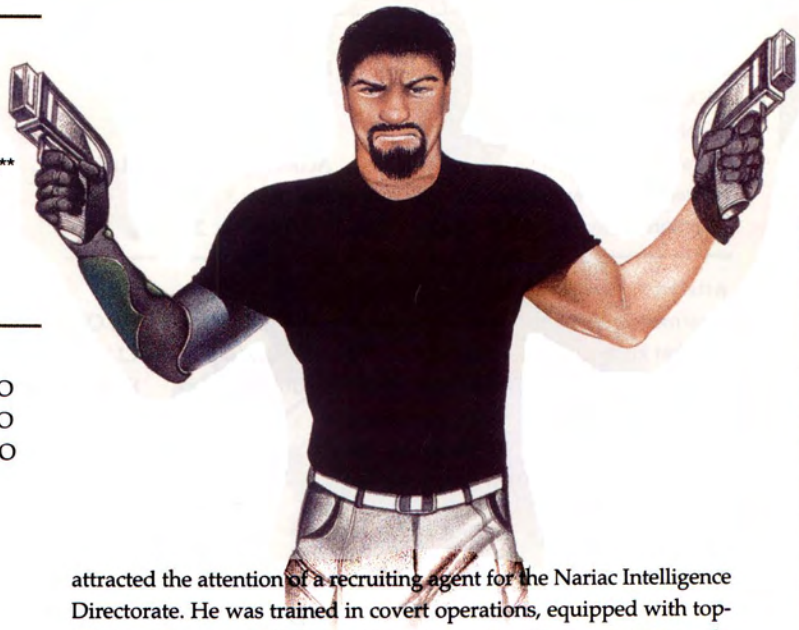
Martial arts: +1 step resistance modifier in hand-to-hand combat; Pistol: Quick-draw; Hacking: –1 step bonus to *hacking* skill checks.

Perks and Flaws

Powerful Enemy (the Nariac Intelligence Directorate, Good); Bad Temper (Good).

Cyber Gear

Cyber limb–right arm (Ordinary); battleklaw (Good); nanocomputer (Amazing); reflex wiring (Good), fast chip (Amazing), subdermal NI jack, subdermal communicator. Enhance programs: hacking (Good), pistol (Good), martial arts (Good). Other programs: datadoc (Good), datascan (Good), decode (Good), break-in (Good).



An expatriate from the Nariac Domain, Pete Sokolov is a professional bounty hunter who has wandered through the Verge since a few months after the Return. He is a tall, rangy man with short-cropped dark hair, a neatly trimmed goatee, and fierce blue eyes. He typically dresses in black fatigue trousers, combat boots, a black sleeveless t-shirt, and a bulky flight jacket. When working, he usually wears a long bulletproof duster and at least two guns. Sokolov smokes frequently when he's tense or angry.

Back Story: Born in 2469, Sokolov grew up on the war-ravaged world of Novo Tver. He was orphaned at an early age and interned in refugee camps for most of his lonely childhood. Without friends or family, he turned to theft and petty crime to survive. At sixteen he attracted the attention of a recruiting agent for the Nariac Intelligence Directorate. He was trained in covert operations, equipped with top-notch cyberware, and eventually assigned to a black ops commando team at the age of twenty-two.

Sokolov served as a soldier for the Domain for three years, but then his team was involved in an operation that went terribly wrong. With all of his teammates dead, Sokolov had to use a fusion device to sterilize the mission. Realizing that he could easily be considered dead by any investigation of the failed mission, Sokolov struck out for the Verge. As far as he was concerned, he owed the Domain nothing.

Psych Profile: A brooding misanthropist, Sokolov has no real friends and very few professional associates; in his view, nine out of ten people are looking out for number one, and the other one just isn't paying attention. Despite this cynical attitude, Sokolov takes his work and his word very seriously. Once he's said he's going to do something, he doesn't rest until it gets done, and he never goes back on a promise.

Tactics: Most people are surprised to learn that Sokolov is basically a cautious man—he'll do anything in his power to stack the odds in his favor. He possesses serious cybernetic augmentation, including a fast chip that adds a –3 step bonus to his action checks when activated, plus a number of enhance programs for physical combat and combat piloting that provide him with a –2 step bonus to the appropriate skill while active. Sokolov saves these cyber-burns for when he really needs them, since he'll suffer stun and fatigue damage by using them recklessly. His preferred weapon is a Wesshaur 390 sabot pistol, but his cybernetic arm includes a 25-cm retractable blade that he can employ with his *martial arts* skill.

While Sokolov can be a deadly foe in physical combat, he works hard to avoid fights through the use of his computer skills. Given a chance, Sokolov will research a target or facility and build a database of maps, blueprints, traffic patterns, etc., to maximize his effectiveness in any kind of confrontation. His NID nanocomputer is a device of Amazing quality, providing a –2 step bonus to action checks while engaged in computer activities. He possesses a large library of programs of Good quality, providing a –2 step bonus to skill checks against most computer skills.

In Your Campaign: Pete Sokolov might take a job to track down the heroes if they've managed to anger some powerful personage. He's smart, patient, and ruthless—if the heroes are too tough to take down directly, Sokolov uses diversions to split up the group and goes after weaker heroes on their own. As an ally, Sokolov is abrasive, arrogant, and strongly inclined to work on his own, but he's also willing to use any means necessary to do the job right.

Geille Monashi

Level 12 human Tech Op

STR 9	—	INT 13	(+2)
DEX 12	(+1)	WIL 10	—
CON 10	—	PER 12	—

Durability: 10/10/5
Action Check: 15+/14/7/3
Movement: Sprint 20, run 12, walk 4
#Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Good/3
Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Unarmed–*martial*	11/5/2	d6s/d6+2s/d4w	LI/O
Combat knife	10/5/2	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w	LI/O
Laser pistol (untrained)	6/3/1	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	En/O

Defenses

CF short coat: d4–1 (LI), d4–1 (HI), d6–3 (En)

Skills

Athletics [9]; Melee Attack [9]–*blade* [10], *bludgeon* [10]; Unarmed Attack [9]–*power martial arts* 2 [11]; Manipulation [12]–*lockpick* 2 [14], *pickpocket* [13]; Vehicle Operation [12]; Stamina [10]; Computer Science [13]–*hacking* 5 [18], *hardware* 4 [17], *programming* 6 [19]; Knowledge [13]–*computer operation* 5 [18], *area: Penates* 3 [16], *language: Standard* 3 [16]; System Operation [13]–*comms* [14]; Technical Science [13]–*invention* [14], *repair* [14], *technical knowledge (OS design)* 2 [15]; Awareness [10]–*intuition* [11]; Resolve [10]; Interaction [12]–*bargain* 2 [14], *charm* 2 [14], *seduce* 2 [14]; Telepathy [12]–*datalink* 2 [14].

Rank Benefits

Hacking: –1 step bonus to *hacking* skill checks; Hardware: –1 step bonus to *hardware* skill checks; Programming: modify any program; Programming: create new programs of Marginal or Ordinary quality.

Perks and Flaws

Great Looks: –1 step bonus to Personality-based skill checks.

Other

Geille normally carries a computer gauntlet of Good quality with the following programs: datadoc (Good), datascan (Good), decode (Good), encode (Good), surge (Ordinary), break-in (Ordinary), crash (Good), alarm (Good), fortress (Good), control (Ordinary).

Brilliant and sharp as a blade, Geille Monashi fought her way out of the gang-ruled tenements of Penates. She is a computer engineer of surpassing skill, a programmer and hardware developer who can work miracles with machinery. Like those of many former Solar colonists of Penates, Geille's features show a hint of Old Earth's ethnic traits—in her case, Asian. She usually wears her hair in a long, dark ponytail, and she prefers to dress casually in tailored jumpsuits or excursion gear. She has a strong temper and settles into a silent, stone-faced glower when she's not happy with the way things are going.

Back Story: Twenty-eight years of age, Geille spent the first sixteen years of her life surviving the Pict-dominated ghettoes of Santiago on Penates. By the time she reached adolescence, Geille had decided that she wanted out. She found her way into HelixTech, the largest and most powerful corporation based in Pict territory. Geille worked hard to master the skills she'd need to climb from the ranks of hopeless laborers to the corporate towers. She chose computers.

At the age of eighteen, Geille escaped from the labor pool, gaining entrance into an intense education and training program. She discovered that she possessed a latent psionic talent for interfacing with computers and proved to be uncannily good at working with them. After five years of harsh schooling, she was assigned to HelixTech's Research and Development Division. Driven by her work, she had no friends, no romantic interests, and no life outside the lab.

Geille's employment with HelixTech came to an end when she allowed herself to become involved with Karcen Borun. The exec used her to steal and then sabotage company research, intending to profit from the stolen materiel. When Geille doublecrossed Borun, he sent Pete Sokolov after her.

Psych Profile: Like Sokolov, Geille is a loner. She is strongly self-reliant and suspicious of anyone in a position of power or authority. She is relentless and determined when faced by a challenge, working tirelessly to overcome any obstacle. Wealth is very important to her, since she believes that she'll fall back into the misery of her childhood if she isn't good enough and ruthless enough to succeed.

Tactics: Computers are Geille Monashi's weapons. She's not a hot-shot grid pilot fighting for abstract values of information freedom and nihilism; she's a businesslike professional with a rare gift for creative genius. Given half a chance, she'll use her computer skills to study her enemies, lay traps and alarms to hinder their actions, and finally launch preemptive attacks that make it impossible for them to strike back. She's not afraid of physical confrontation and even commands modest hand-to-hand fighting skills—the legacy of her youth on the streets of Santiago. However, she knows that she has better ways to hit her enemies than with her fists.

In Your Campaign: Geille spent years working on secret HelixTech projects that relied heavily on her own inventions and processes. Some of these became major commercial releases for the company, but others were very specialized jobs such as espionage systems, defense projects, and strategic intelligence hardware. She wants to recover the work she did as HelixTech's resident genius and make it her own again. Geille may help heroes taking on a corrupt corporation or government to recover her work, or she might target a company the heroes are supposed to defend.

Sokolov and Monashi make an exceptionally formidable team. It's a contentious relationship, but they have a great deal of respect for each other's abilities, and they've learned to trust one another implicitly.

Karcen Borun

Level 14 human Diplomat (Free Agent)

STR 10	—	INT 12	(+1)
DEX 9	—	WIL 12	(+1)
CON 10	—	PER 13	—
Durability: 10/10/5		Action Check: 13+/12/6/3	
Movement: Sprint 20, run 12, walk 4		#Actions: 2	
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2		Last Resorts: 3	

Attacks

Unarmed (untrained)	5/2/1	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O
Laser pistol	11/5/2	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	En/O

Defenses

CF softsuit: d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6–1 (En)

Deflection inducer: +3 step bonus to Borun's Strength and Dexterity Resistance Modifiers when activated (+2 step penalty to Borun's attacks)

Skills

Athletics [10]; Modern Ranged Weapon [9]–*pistol* 2 [11]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [10]–*endurance* [11]; Business [12]–*corporate* 5 [17], *illicit* 4 [16]; Knowledge [12]–*computer operation* 3 [15], *deduce* 2 [14], *area: Penates* 3 [15], *language: Standard* 3 [15]; Law [12]–*enforcement* [13], *specific (corporate)* 2 [14]; System Operation [12]–*comms* [13], *sensors* [13]; Administration [12]–*bureaucracy* 3 [15], *management* 3 [15]; Awareness [12]–*intuition* [13]; Culture [13]–*diplomacy* 3 [16], *etiquette* (Penates) 3 [16], *first encounter* [14]; Deception [13]–*bluff* 4 [17], *bribe* 3 [16], *gamble* [14]; Interaction [13]–*bargain* 3 [16], *charm* 4 [17], *interview* 3 [16], *seduce* 3 [16]; Leadership [13].

Rank Benefits

Illicit business: Ignore 2 steps of penalties associated with illegal transactions; Etiquette: –1 step bonus to *diplomacy* skill checks on Penates.

Perks and Flaws

Filthy Rich; Great Looks: –1 step bonus to Personality-based skill checks; Obsession (winning), Amazing.

Other

Karcen Borun is almost always accompanied by a security detail of several top-notch agents. Refer to the Supporting Character template for "law enforcer" on page 98 of the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Executive vice president of HelixTech's Security Division, Karcen Borun is a player. He radiates confidence, power, and self-assurance, easily assuming control of any situation. Every word he speaks, every gesture he makes, every action he chooses is part of a seamless performance designed to get people to do what he wants. On the surface, Karcen Borun presents a front of familiar affability, with the rugged good looks of an outdoorsman and an easy-going manner.

While he looks like a hale outdoorsman in his mid-thirties, Borun is actually seventy-eight years old. His glow of health comes from the most expensive rejuvenation treatments he can find; his ruddy tan and bleached-blond hair are just as artificial. His face and physique have been surgically altered to perfection.

Back Story: Karcen Borun is a native of Santiago on the planet Penates, the child of high-ranking HelixTech officers. He never set foot outside HelixTech's fortified compound, growing up inside the executive towers of the megacorp. Even as a young man, Karcen began to lay his path to power. He made the right friendships, cultivated the right habits, and he sought the most powerful patrons.

For almost twenty years, Karcen built a ladder leading to the top. When HelixTech's Board of Directors decided to replace an aging Vice President of Research and Development, Borun quietly arranged for the board members to split between two more qualified contenders for the position, then slipped into the boardroom as a "young and easily controlled" candidate tolerable to both sides. Playing off all factions, Karcen Borun built an internal empire within the halls of HelixTech. With clients, allies, and sympathetic supporters throughout the organization, his power reached far beyond the Security Division. HelixTech, a corporation worth trillions of credits and employing more than one hundred thousand people, struck Borun as too small to suit the scope of his ambitions. He wanted to be king.

Psych Profile: Karcen Borun is a predator. He views everyone around him as cattle or competition. Carefully concealing his ambition and contempt beneath a facade of humor and congeniality, he is a master of misdirection. Fair play is a concept he uses only to his advantage.

As he has grown older, Karcen's ambition has grown into a desperate hunger. He senses that his reach will never equal his ambition, so he is willing to hazard high risks for big gains. Increasingly contemptuous of the people around him, Borun occasionally lets the facade fall as he strives for bolder and more decisive action in the pursuit of his goals.

Tactics: While Borun doesn't lack courage, he avoids situations in which risks outweigh potential gains. He believes in using the appropriate assets to accomplish his goals. If a group of heroes are giving him trouble, he'll assign corporate security teams and write checks to run them to ground. As head of the corporation's Security Division, Borun commands a private army with intelligence assets, billions of credits of top-notch equipment, and thousands of personnel. Tactical command isn't what interests Borun; he has generals to handle simple exercises such as military operations and covert actions.

In Your Campaign: Before the events described in *Zero Point*, Karcen Borun is one of the four or five most powerful men in the Lucullus system. He plans to carve HelixTech into pieces, wrenching entire divisions away from the conglomerate to form a new company of his own. To do this, he must suborn dozens of key people throughout the organization, hide or misallocate staggering amounts of personnel and equipment, and cut below-the-table deals with the other powers of Lucullus to help him forge his private kingdom. He might use freelance adventurers as agents in his plan, frame some likely dupes to damage a corporate rival, or even take some action that the heroes begin to investigate independently. Karcen Borun is a mover and shaker; all kinds of plots and scams surround his actions.

Marius Grayes

Level 10 mutant Diplomat (Combat spec)

STR 15*	(+3)	INT 10	—
DEX 7*	—	WIL 12	(+1)
CON 13	—	PER 11	—

Durability: 13/13/7 | Action Check: 12+/11/5/2
Movement: Sprint 22, run 14, walk 4 | #Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Ordinary/3 | Last Resorts: 2

* Includes +1 Strength, –1 Dexterity for effects of High-G adaptation in Earth-normal gravity. In a high-G environment, these scores are STR 14, DEX 8.

Attacks

Unarmed–*brawl*	19/9/4	d4+4s/d4+5s/d4+6s	LI/O
Pulse baton	18/9/4	d8+3s/d4+5w/d6+5w	En/O
Mass pistol	8/4/2	d6w/d6+2w/d6m	En/G

Defenses

CF short coat: d4–1 (LI), d4–1 (HI), d6–3 (En)

Skills

Athletics [15]; Melee Attack [15]–*bludgeon* 2 [17], *powered* 3 [18]; Unarmed Attack [15]–*brawl* 4 [19]; Modern Ranged Weapons [7]–*pistol* [7]; Vehicle Operation [7]; Stamina [13]–*endurance* [14]; Business [10]–*corporate* [11], *illicit* [11]; Knowledge [10]–*area: Penates* 3 [13], *language: Standard* 3 [13]; Security [10]–*protection protocols* [11]; Administration [12]–*management* 2 [14]; Awareness [12]–*intuition* [13]; Investigate [12]–*interrogate* 2 [14], *track* [13]; Resolve [12]; Deception [11]–*bluff* 4 [15], *bribe* 2 [13], *gamble* 4 [15]; Interaction [11]–*bargain* 3 [14], *intimidate* 5 [16], *taunt* 2 [13]; Leadership [11]–*command* [12], *inspire* [12].

Rank Benefits

Brawl: +1 step penalty to opponent's Stamina checks to avoid knockout.

Perks and Flaws

Fists of Iron: +1 damage in unarmed combat; Fortitude: –1 step bonus to Stamina checks; Filthy Rich; Clumsy: +1 step penalty to Dexterity-based skill checks; Slow: +1 step penalty to action checks.

Mutations

Adaptation, Gravity (Ordinary); Enhanced Strength (Good); Toxin Tolerance (Ordinary); Minor Physical Change (Good).

Once a mob soldier and enforcer for the Jamaican Syndicate, the criminal organization that rules almost one-fifth of Penates, Marius Grayes has climbed the ranks within the shadowy organization. He is a thug masquerading as a businessman, watching over his domain of "revenue sources" with unwavering vigilance. Marius is a descendent of a group of Taurean colonists genetically engineered to conquer a hot, arid, high-G planet; he is extraordinarily short and stocky, with a powerful musculature and hairless black skin. His hands are large enough to palm a bowling ball and strong enough to crack it.

Back Story: Marius Grayes' great-grandparents were members of a group of colonists who settled the hothouse world of Antigua. Dissatisfied with prospects there, his father—an independent trader with a beat-up systemship—decided to relocate to Lucullus in 2476. He sold the ship and used the proceeds to open a sleazy bar in the city of Port Royal. Marius was fifteen at the time; he never attended another day of school, working in his dad's business from that point forward.

Unable to see any good long-term prospects in legitimate business and feuding constantly with his father, Marius left two years later and started working as a barkeep and bouncer. His natural strength and hardiness were perfect for such work, and soon he was making more money as a part-time thug than he was keeping bar. His break came in 2483, when he started working full-time for Syndicate enforcer Kit Masen. Masen was a low-level boss on the way up; instead of running numbers rackets and protection shakedowns, Marius was now working in corporate security. His natural drive, intuition, and blunt diplomacy soon made him Masen's trusted lieutenant.

Kit Masen's growing influence and ambition brought him into conflict with a number of other Syndicate bosses. He died in an unexplained aircar accident in 2490. Marius Grayes narrowly avoided a similar fate, then led Masen's organization in a successful counterattack against Masen's enemy. On the day Grayes killed the rival boss with his bare hands, he was approached by agents of Masen's mysterious employer, the next boss in the Syndicate leadership circles. He'd earned his place in the secret ranks of power.

Psych Profile: Marius Grayes is suspicious, distrustful, paranoid, and disconcertingly direct and honest about it. He speaks plainly and does what he says he's going to do. He recognizes that he's not the brightest man in the world, but he places great faith in his own willpower, intuition, and experience. As far as Grayes is concerned, any given day might be the day that one of his rivals decides to move in on his organization, so he spends most of his time and attention watching his peers for signs of hostility and weakness.

Tactics: Like Karcen Borun, Grayes commands a formidable organization of talented and generally loyal people. He's perfectly willing to use Syndicate resources to handle routine problems. If he has a weakness, it might be over-reliance on his own leadership and intuition; when his subordinates have difficulty with a situation, he's likely to move in and take over personally. Grayes figures that there are few problems he can't solve by beating the living daylights out of them.

In a physical confrontation, Grayes is likely to wade in headfirst. He often uses a pulse baton as his weapon of choice, but he is also exceptionally dangerous in a bare-knuckle brawl.

In Your Campaign: Marius Grayes makes a great mob boss villain for the heroes to tackle. While he is not particularly malevolent in his administration of the properties and businesses the Syndicate has placed in his care, he brooks no rivals and no dissent. The Syndicate's strength rests on unquestioned dominance of as much of Penates as they can hold, so crusading heroes trying to "clean up" the town—or mercenary heroes looking to make a buck at the Jamaican Syndicate's expense—could easily run afoul of Marius Grayes.

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To purchase a subscription or **a sample issue** ($3.50) or Bundle of Trouble #2 ($9.95 + $2 S/H), send a check or money order (made payable to **Kenzer and Company**) to:

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Mail Order Fulfillments
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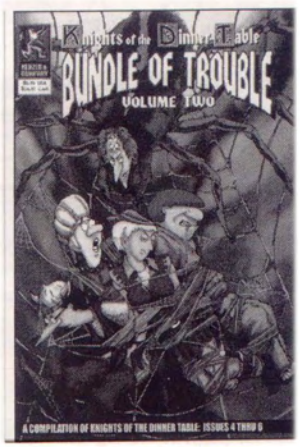
or fax a valid Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover card number, card type and expiration date to us at **(650) 233-8270** or E-mail the same information to us at **kenzerco@aol.com**

Knights of the Dinner Table™ magazine was voted **Best Professional Games Magazine** by the **YOU** the gaming public!! Thanks!!



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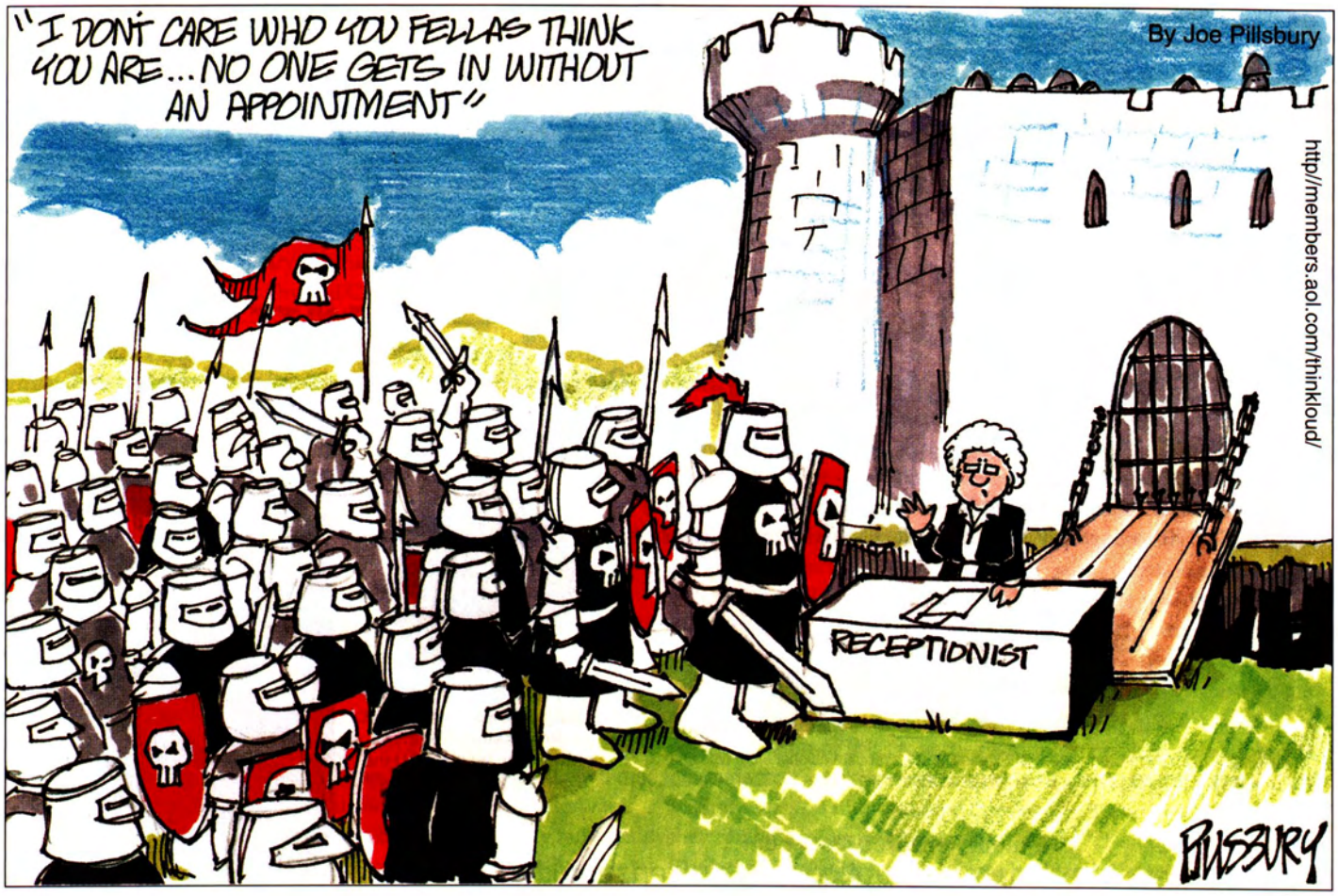
Dragon Mirth™

By Aaron Williams

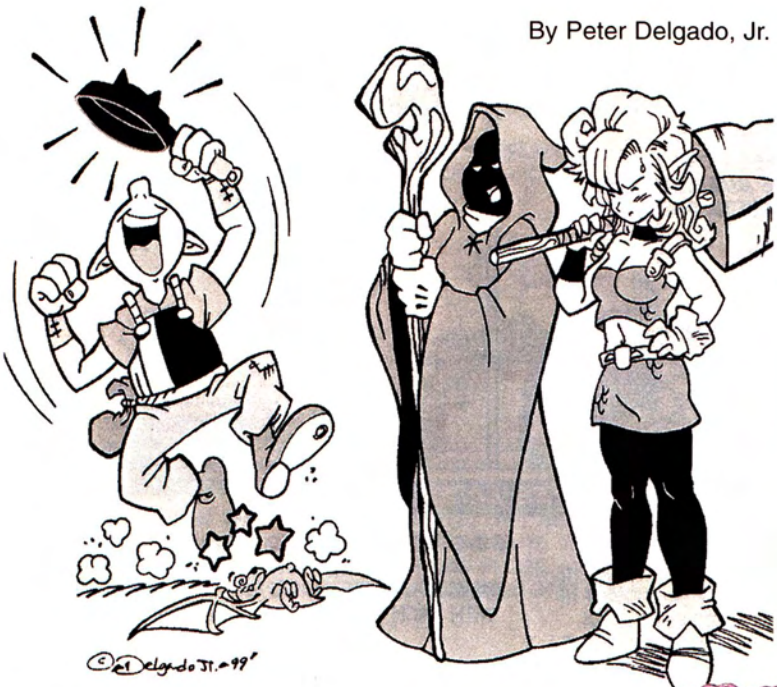
"He followed me home, Dad! Can I slay him?"

By Dwane Meyer

"Gesundheit"

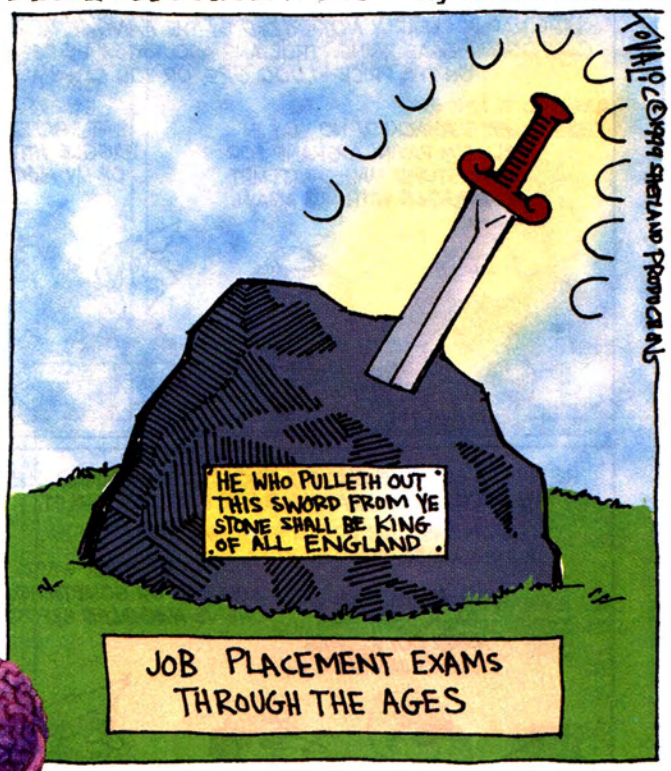

"I DON'T CARE WHO YOU FELLAS THINK YOU ARE... NO ONE GETS IN WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT"
By Joe Pillsbury
http//members.aol.com/thinkloud/
RECEPTIONIST
PILLSBURY

By Peter Delgado, Jr.



"Bet you any amount that he's first level."

The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic



MIND FLAYERS

by Mike Selinker

no. 1

In this bestiary of a word search are 28 creatures for you to track down. All are—or, in one case, used to be—denizens of the MONSTROUS MANUAL™. Each is five letters long, and each makes exactly one 90 degree turn somewhere in its length. DJINN is filled in to get you started; you need to name and locate the other 27. When you're done, you'll have used each of the letters in the grid at least once.

D	J	I	N	N	I	T	I	G
S	T	A	N	E	A	T	Y	E
O	I	R	D	S	Y	E	B	R
H	T	E	Y	M	P	H	M	U
G	M	P	N	D	L	I	U	M
I	H	O	R	A	Y	R	D	M
W	L	A	N	P	S	H	E	Y
L	S	L	R	G	D	L	R	G
T	U	L	H	A	O	O	R	I
T	R	O	A	U	N	T	N	A

DJINN _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

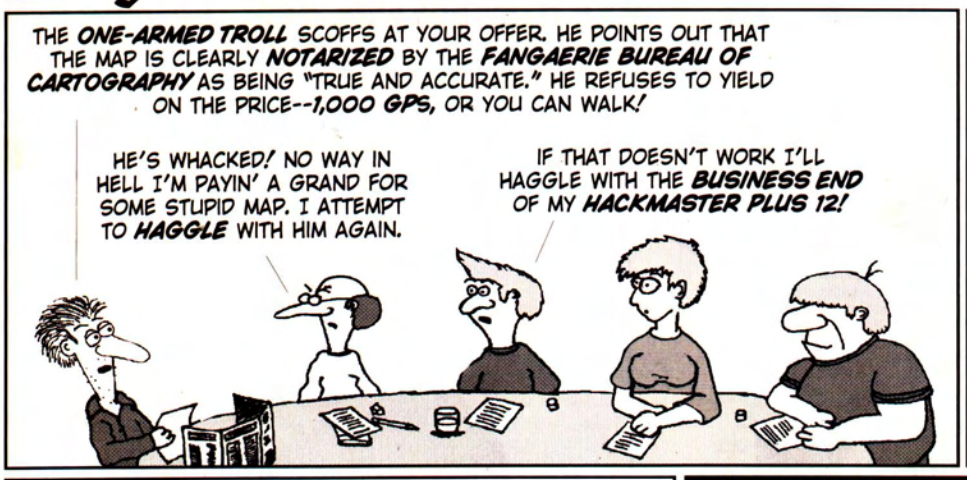
_____ _____ _____ _____

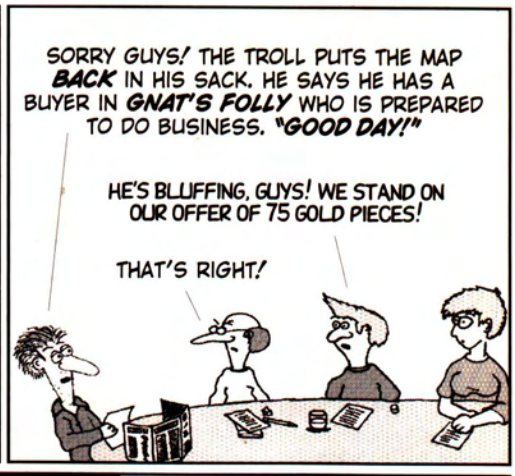
_____ _____ _____ _____

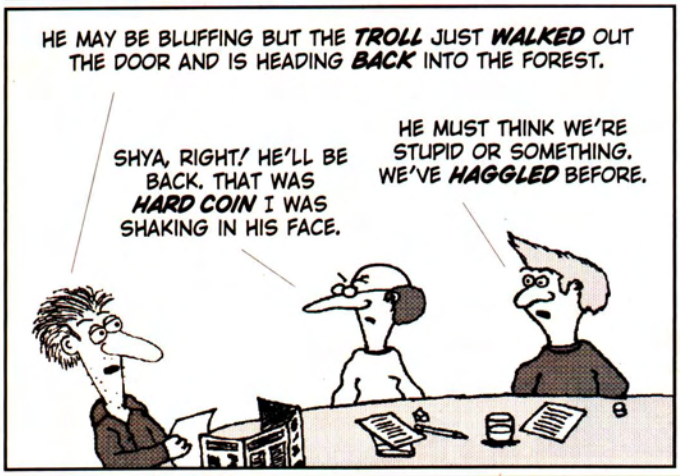
Answer appears next issue.

Knights of the Dinner Table

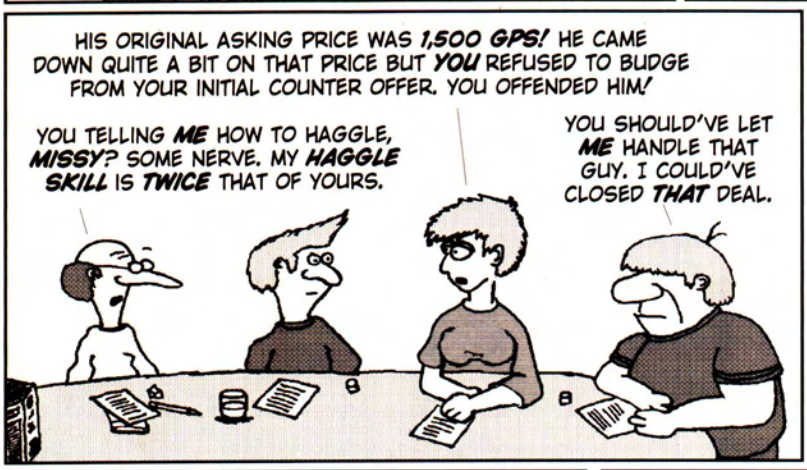
BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

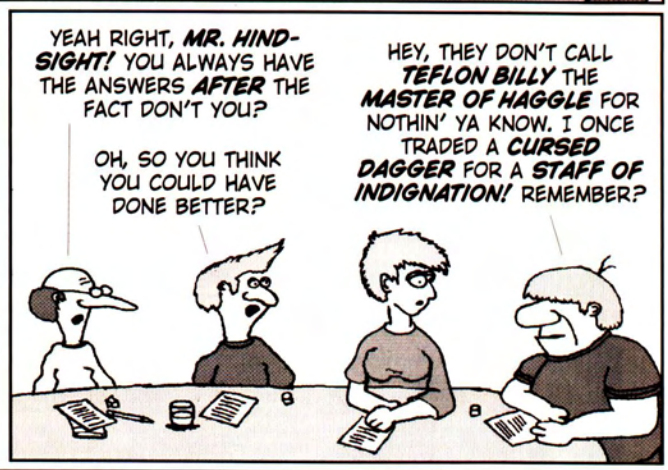

THE ONE-ARMED TROLL SCOFFS AT YOUR OFFER. HE POINTS OUT THAT THE MAP IS CLEARLY NOTARIZED BY THE FANGAERIE BUREAU OF CARTOGRAPHY AS BEING "TRUE AND ACCURATE." HE REFUSES TO YIELD ON THE PRICE--1,000 GPS, OR YOU CAN WALK!
HE'S WHACKED! NO WAY IN HELL I'M PAYIN' A GRAND FOR SOME STUPID MAP. I ATTEMPT TO HAGGLE WITH HIM AGAIN.
IF THAT DOESN'T WORK I'LL HAGGLE WITH THE BUSINESS END OF MY HACKMASTER PLUS 12!

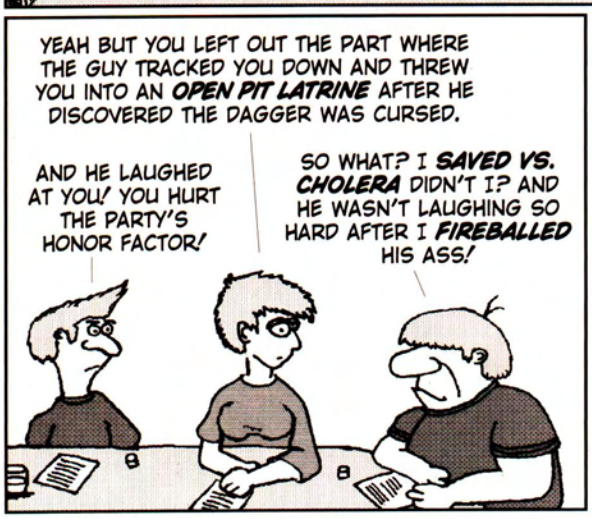

SORRY GUYS! THE TROLL PUTS THE MAP BACK IN HIS SACK. HE SAYS HE HAS A BUYER IN GNAT'S FOLLY WHO IS PREPARED TO DO BUSINESS. "GOOD DAY!"
HE'S BLUFFING, GUYS! WE STAND ON OUR OFFER OF 75 GOLD PIECES!
THAT'S RIGHT!

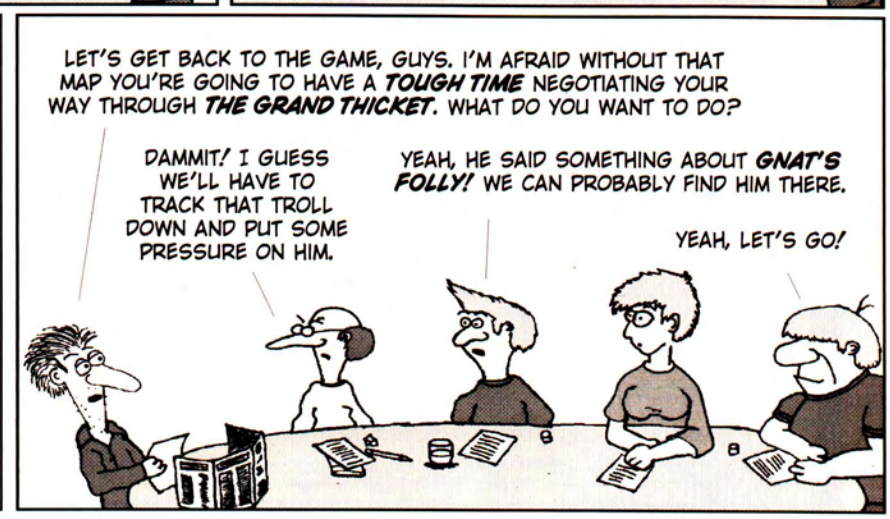

HE MAY BE BLUFFING BUT THE TROLL JUST WALKED OUT THE DOOR AND IS HEADING BACK INTO THE FOREST.
SHYA, RIGHT! HE'LL BE BACK. THAT WAS HARD COIN I WAS SHAKING IN HIS FACE.
HE MUST THINK WE'RE STUPID OR SOMETHING. WE'VE HAGGLED BEFORE.

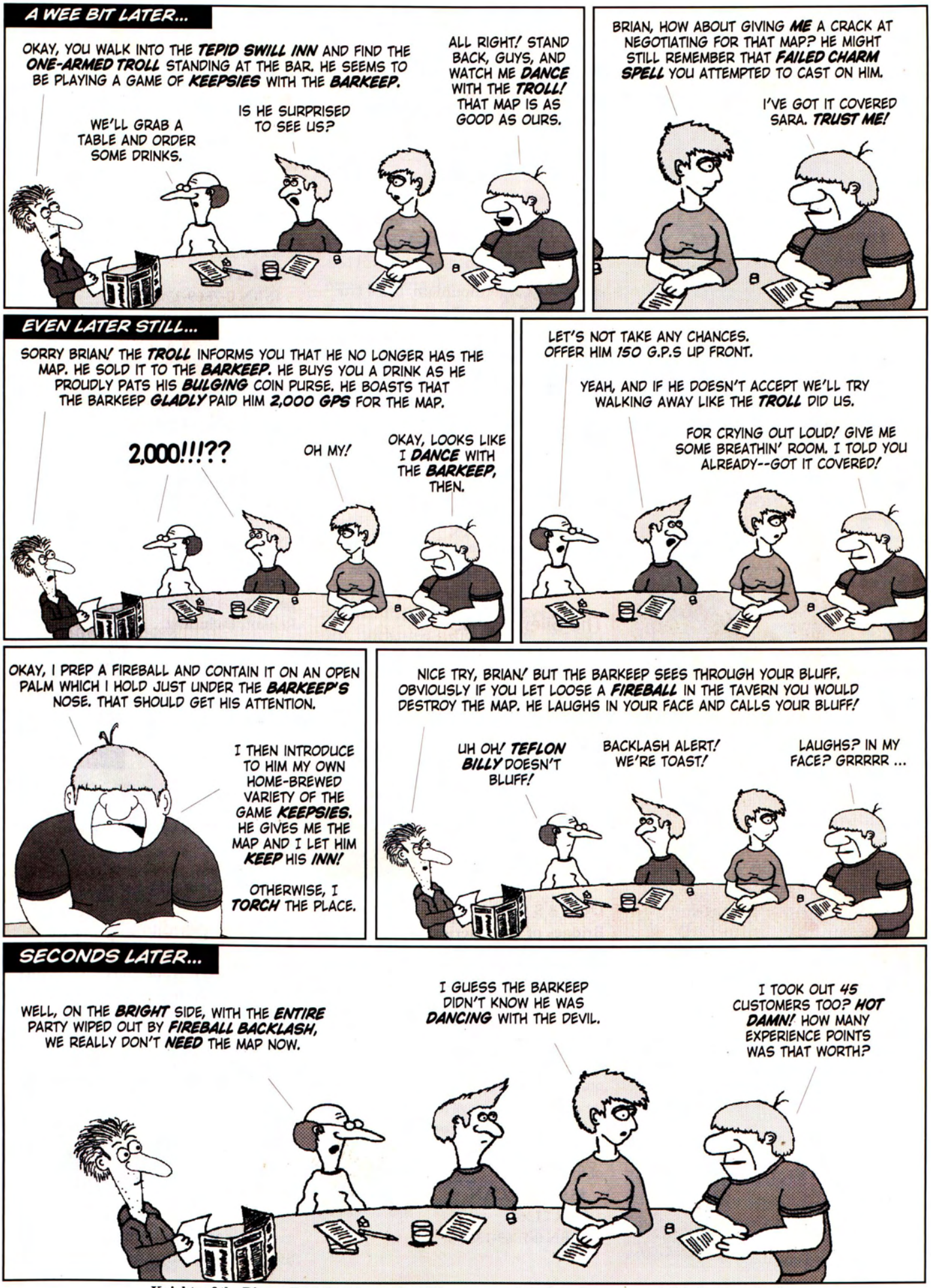
THIRTY MINUTES LATER...
I DON'T THINK THE RAT BASTARD IS COMING BACK. WHAT THE HELL?
GUYS I DON'T THINK YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT HAGGLING IS ALL ABOUT. IT'S A DANCE! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO COME UP A BIT WITH EACH STEP AND HE COMES DOWN A BIT.


HIS ORIGINAL ASKING PRICE WAS 1,500 GPS! HE CAME DOWN QUITE A BIT ON THAT PRICE BUT YOU REFUSED TO BUDGE FROM YOUR INITIAL COUNTER OFFER. YOU OFFENDED HIM!
YOU TELLING ME HOW TO HAGGLE, MISSY? SOME NERVE. MY HAGGLE SKILL IS TWICE THAT OF YOURS.
YOU SHOULD'VE LET ME HANDLE THAT GUY. I COULD'VE CLOSED THAT DEAL.


YEAH RIGHT, MR. HINDSIGHT! YOU ALWAYS HAVE THE ANSWERS AFTER THE FACT DON'T YOU?
OH, SO YOU THINK YOU COULD HAVE DONE BETTER?
HEY, THEY DON'T CALL TEFLON BILLY THE MASTER OF HAGGLE FOR NOTHIN' YA KNOW. I ONCE TRADED A CURSED DAGGER FOR A STAFF OF INDIGNATION! REMEMBER?


YEAH BUT YOU LEFT OUT THE PART WHERE THE GUY TRACKED YOU DOWN AND THREW YOU INTO AN OPEN PIT LATRINE AFTER HE DISCOVERED THE DAGGER WAS CURSED.
AND HE LAUGHED AT YOU! YOU HURT THE PARTY'S HONOR FACTOR!
SO WHAT? I SAVED VS. CHOLERA DIDN'T I? AND HE WASN'T LAUGHING SO HARD AFTER I FIREBALLED HIS ASS!


LET'S GET BACK TO THE GAME, GUYS. I'M AFRAID WITHOUT THAT MAP YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A TOUGH TIME NEGOTIATING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE GRAND THICKET. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
DAMMIT! I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO TRACK THAT TROLL DOWN AND PUT SOME PRESSURE ON HIM.
YEAH, HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT GNAT'S FOLLY! WE CAN PROBABLY FIND HIM THERE.
YEAH, LET'S GO!


A WEE BIT LATER...
OKAY, YOU WALK INTO THE TEPID SWILL INN AND FIND THE ONE-ARMED TROLL STANDING AT THE BAR. HE SEEMS TO BE PLAYING A GAME OF KEEPSIES WITH THE BARKEEP.
WE'LL GRAB A TABLE AND ORDER SOME DRINKS.
IS HE SURPRISED TO SEE US?
ALL RIGHT! STAND BACK, GUYS, AND WATCH ME DANCE WITH THE TROLL! THAT MAP IS AS GOOD AS OURS.
BRIAN, HOW ABOUT GIVING ME A CRACK AT NEGOTIATING FOR THAT MAP? HE MIGHT STILL REMEMBER THAT FAILED CHARM SPELL YOU ATTEMPTED TO CAST ON HIM.
I'VE GOT IT COVERED SARA. TRUST ME!
EVEN LATER STILL...
SORRY BRIAN! THE TROLL INFORMS YOU THAT HE NO LONGER HAS THE MAP. HE SOLD IT TO THE BARKEEP. HE BUYS YOU A DRINK AS HE PROUDLY PATS HIS BULGING COIN PURSE. HE BOASTS THAT THE BARKEEP GLADLY PAID HIM 2,000 GPS FOR THE MAP.
2,000!!!??
OH MY!
OKAY, LOOKS LIKE I DANCE WITH THE BARKEEP, THEN.
LET'S NOT TAKE ANY CHANCES. OFFER HIM 150 G.P.S UP FRONT.
YEAH, AND IF HE DOESN'T ACCEPT WE'LL TRY WALKING AWAY LIKE THE TROLL DID US.
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! GIVE ME SOME BREATHIN' ROOM. I TOLD YOU ALREADY--GOT IT COVERED!
OKAY, I PREP A FIREBALL AND CONTAIN IT ON AN OPEN PALM WHICH I HOLD JUST UNDER THE BARKEEP'S NOSE. THAT SHOULD GET HIS ATTENTION.
I THEN INTRODUCE TO HIM MY OWN HOME-BREWED VARIETY OF THE GAME KEEPSIES. HE GIVES ME THE MAP AND I LET HIM KEEP HIS INN!
OTHERWISE, I TORCH THE PLACE.
NICE TRY, BRIAN! BUT THE BARKEEP SEES THROUGH YOUR BLUFF. OBVIOUSLY IF YOU LET LOOSE A FIREBALL IN THE TAVERN YOU WOULD DESTROY THE MAP. HE LAUGHS IN YOUR FACE AND CALLS YOUR BLUFF!
UH OH! TEFLON BILLY DOESN'T BLUFF!
BACKLASH ALERT! WE'RE TOAST!
LAUGHS? IN MY FACE? GRRRRR ...
SECONDS LATER...
WELL, ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, WITH THE ENTIRE PARTY WIPED OUT BY FIREBALL BACKLASH, WE REALLY DON'T NEED THE MAP NOW.
I GUESS THE BARKEEP DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS DANCING WITH THE DEVIL.
I TOOK OUT 45 CUSTOMERS TOO? HOT DAMN! HOW MANY EXPERIENCE POINTS WAS THAT WORTH?

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Send story ideas to jollyrb@aol.com or KODT, 1003 Monroe Pike, Marion, IN 46953

Previews

JUNE

Return to the Keep on the Borderlands

An AD&D® Silver Anniversary Adventure
By John D. Rateliff

Venture back to the Keep on the Borderlands and the Caves of Chaos, where fell creatures wait for unwary adventurers. This presentation of the famous E. Gary Gygax D&D® adventure allows characters to re-explore the best-selling adventure of all time! Updated for use with the AD&D game, this adventure expands upon the original, providing even more thrills for beginning-level characters.

This re-telling and sequel to the classic adventure is part of the year-long Silver Anniversary celebration. See how your new AD&D characters fare against the original proving ground for D&D heroes. Includes an updated map of the original adventuring region, as well as an expanded storyline in the tradition of the early days of the D&D game.

$12.95/$18.95 CAN
TSR 11327
ISBN 0-7869-1327-4

Skullport

A FORGOTTEN REALMS® Accessory
By Joseph Wolf

Directly below glorious Waterdeep, adjacent to infamous Undermountain, lies a city where good and evil put aside their eternal conflict to live and let live: Skullport. Strange sites and activities abound in this subterranean "Casablanca." This resource supports FORGOTTEN REALMS campaigns set in and around the City of Splendors, but Skullport can be used as its own campaign or adapted for any world that needs a city of thieves.

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ISBN 0-7869-1348-7

The Silent Blade

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel
By R.A. Salvatore

A paperback reprint of R.A. Salvatore's chronicle of the adventures of Drizzt Do'Urden, Wulfgar, and their greatest foe, the assassin Artemis Entreri.

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Dezra's Quest

Bridges of Time Series
A DRAGONLANCE® Novel
By Chris Pierson

During Krynn's Second Cataclysm an ambitious centaur chieftain makes a terrible pact with Chaos. Ten years later, smarting from the consequences of that pact, a lone centaur journeys to Solace, seeking help from Caramon, the aging Hero of the Lance.

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By Richard Baker

Peter Sokolov, a bounty hunter and cybernetic killer for hire, is caught up in a deadly struggle for power and supremacy in the black abyss between the stars.

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JULY

FORGOTTEN REALMS Interactive Atlas

An AD&D Electronic Media Utility
Programming by ProFantasy Ltd.

This CD-ROM is a dream come true for FORGOTTEN REALMS fans, featuring a complete interactive atlas of the entire planet of Abeir-Toril! All overland, city, and dungeon maps of the Realms, including maps never before published, are available to view and print. All maps are fully compatible with and editable in the *AD&D Core Rules CD-ROM 2.0* and *Campaign Cartographer 2*.

Price: TBD
TSR 11451
ISBN 0-7869-1451-3

Star Compendium: Systems of the Verge

An ALTERNITY® STAR*DRIVE Accessory
By David Eckelberry

The Star Compendium provides detailed information on dozens of star systems in the STAR*DRIVE setting. It includes both star systems identified in earlier products and new systems revealed here for the first time—with maps, planetary information, native lifeforms, adventure hooks, and more.

For use with the STAR*DRIVE campaign or any other space opera setting for the ALTERNITY game.

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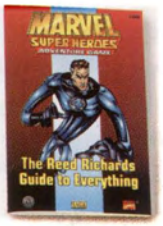
The Reed Richards Guide to Everything

A MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game Accessory
By Mike Selinker



Mister Fantastic, Earth's preeminent super-genius and leader of the Fantastic Four, explains how things work in this one-of-a-kind guide to the World's Greatest Comics! This accessory includes optional rules and a special full-color section that makes this perfect for comics fans and role-playing gamers alike.

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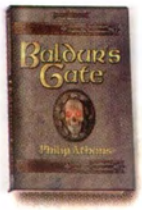
Baldur's Gate

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel
By Philip Athans



A novelization of the bestselling computer game from Interplay. The son of a dead god fights his way along the Sword Coast in search of a truth that could rip the world apart.

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Against the Giants

A GREYHAWK® Novel
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Brave heroes battle fierce giants in the story of one of the most popular D&D game adventure series of all time.

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A DRAGONLANCE Anthology
Edited by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

An anthology of stories from prominent DRAGONLANCE authors, describing the terrible battles and brave exploits of heroes during the first decades of the Fifth Age.

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ISBN 0-7869-1346-0

AUGUST

Sea of Fallen Stars

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Accessory
By Steven E. Schend

Sea of Fallen Stars allows heroes to explore the depths of this mysterious and uncharted region for the first time. In addition to detailing the cultures and societies that flourish beneath the waves, this product provides rules for taking a land-based FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign underwater. It also features campaign information on the undersea region, aquatic player character races, and many wonders that make this the hottest FORGOTTEN REALMS product this year.

This campaign expansion, written by senior game designer Steven E. Schend, complements and supports Mel Odom's Threat from the Sea novel trilogy.

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By Tony Nixon

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By Johnathan M. Richards

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By J. Gregory Keyes

In the city of Rumq Qaj, Fool Wolf must decide which is the more dangerous: a demon or the hero who has come to slay it.

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"Dungeoncraft,"
"Sage Advice,"
and more!

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Coming Attractions

Cover by Brom

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By Steve Devaney

What dread secrets has Eric Ulmade taken to the grave, and what foul terrors linger in the Ulmade family's clifftop castle? An AD&D® adventure for levels 6–8.

Non-Prophet Organization

By Charles C. Reed

A tinker's premonitions spell disaster for the village of Kellorville. An AD&D adventure for levels 4–7.

Into the Nest of Vipers

By Matthew G. Adkins

A tainted well leads to the discovery of a poison impervious to magic. Can you find the cure before the villagers die? An AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS® adventure for levels 1–3.

The Amulet & the Underdark

By William Kenower

The heroes must recover a stolen peace token to keep two fiefdoms from war. Unfortunately, the pesky thing doesn't stay in one place for long. An AD&D adventure for levels 5–7.

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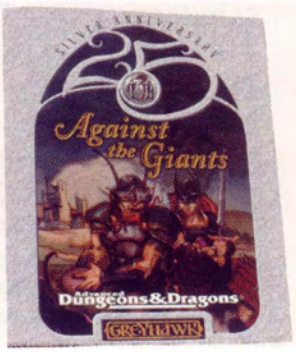
Against the Giants: The Liberation of Geoff

A GREYHAWK Silver Anniversary Adventure
By Sean Reynolds

Revisit and go beyond the classic E. Gary Gygax adventure *Against the Giants* in this Silver Anniversary edition of the AD&D classic. Marauding giants have plagued the human lands for years, but now only the land of Geoff remains in the grip of the giants. As in the classic series of adventures, player characters must storm the steading of a hill giant chief, attack the rift of a frost giant jarl, and invade the hall of a fire giant king. Then they travel even deeper into giant territory to stop this menace once and for all!



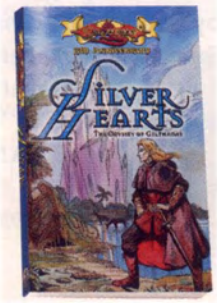
Another in a series of special Silver Anniversary products celebrating twenty-five years of TSR, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®, and the AD&D game!

$17.95/$26.95 CAN
TSR 11413
ISBN 0-7869-1413-0

Dragonlance Reader's Companion: The Odyssey of Gilthanas

A DRAGONLANCE Novella and Sourcebook
By Douglas Niles, Steve Miller, and Stan!

This is the crossover DRAGONLANCE sourcebook that readers and game fans have been waiting for. Utilizing the talents of popular DRAGONLANCE author Douglas Niles and game fan favorites Steve Miller and Stan!, the Reader's Companion follows the tale of the elf prince Gilthanas as he searches for Silvara, his dragon love. Along the way, readers learn about the many Krynnish sites that are steeped in magic and legend. An excellent source of material for gaming enthusiasts, as well as exciting stories that shed new light on beloved characters and locations from the DRAGONLANCE saga.



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Silverfall: Stories of the Seven Sisters

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Seven beautiful sisters, all touched by the hand of the goddess Mystra, are together in one book for the first time as they match wits and magical powers with a Realms-spanning conspiracy.

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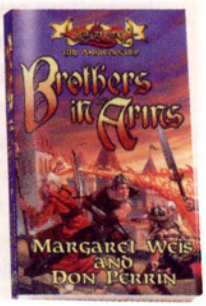
Brothers in Arms: The Raistlin Chronicles, Volume Two

A DRAGONLANCE Novel
By Margaret Weis and Don Perrin



In the months after the events of *The Soulforge*, Raistlin and Caramon join a mercenary army. The army's first assignment is to capture a city that holds a secret known only to Lord Ariakas, commander of the newly formed dragonarmies.

$6.99/$8.95 CAN
TSR 21429
ISBN 0-7869-1429-7

All release dates are subject to change without notice.

TSR NEWS

ALTERNITY Subscription Program Launched

Fans of the ALTERNITY® science fiction roleplaying Game will never have to miss another new product. In March, the ALTERNITY Subscription Program (ASP) began delivering the latest ALTERNITY game products right to the doors of its fans. The ASP offers customized plans for both ALTERNITY players and Gamemasters, with fulfillment as soon as new products are available.

The ASP consists of four plans, each tailored to the individual desires of Alternity game enthusiasts.

ASP #1, the ALTERNITY Core Assortment, is the option for Gamemasters and players interested in the core rules. This package provides all of the baseline ALTERNITY releases in the year.

ASP #2, the STAR*DRIVE® Core Assortment, contains only those products that bear the STAR*DRIVE Campaign Setting logo. (A STAR*DRIVE novel subscription is available as an add-on.)

ASP #3 starts gamers on their way with the new DARK*MATTER™ campaign setting with its launch in November.

ASP #4 is a complete package of all of the STAR*DRIVE Campaign Setting novels.

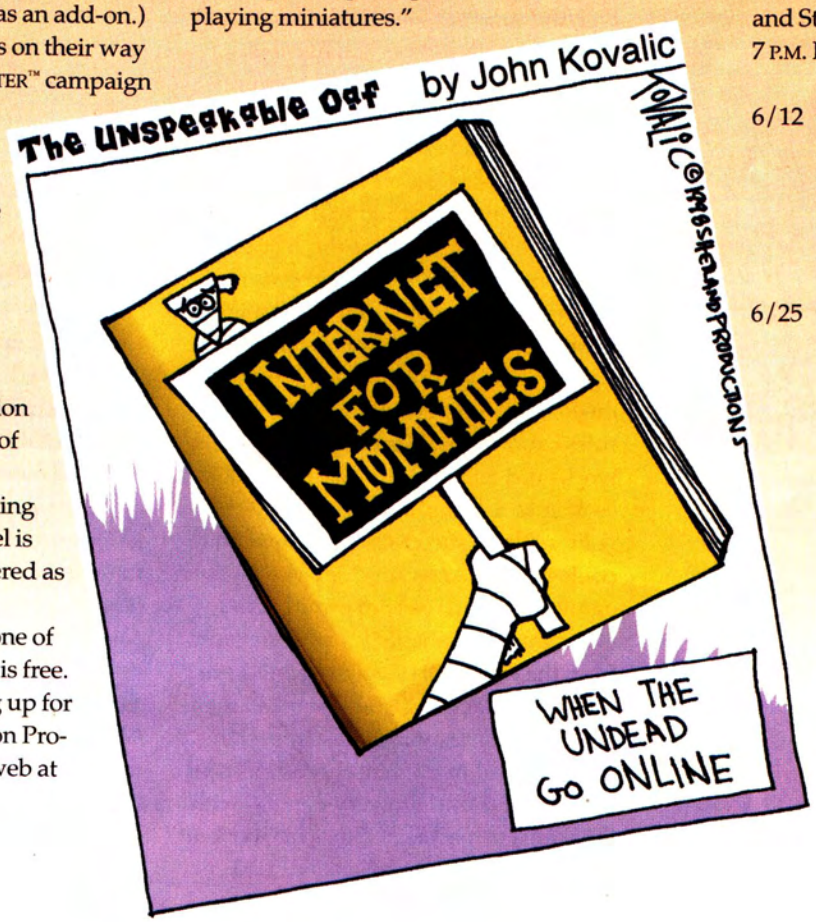
All of the plans sell the product at the suggested retail price. Shipping is included in the subscription price, with the exception of ASP #4, which charges a $5.00 shipping and handling fee for each month a novel is mailed if that plan is ordered as a stand-alone package. If ordered as an add-on to one of the other plans, shipping is free.

Information on signing up for the ALTERNITY Subscription Program is available on the web at **www.tsr.com/Alternity/ASP.html**. You can also contact Christopher Adams at (425) 204-7653 or Wizards of the Coast Customer Service at (800) 324-6596.

Wizards Conjures Miniatures

On March 22, Wizards of the Coast Inc. announced that it will form a new miniatures games division to produce roleplaying miniatures and accessories that supplement the company's DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and other roleplaying games. Bob Watts, a well-known leader in the miniatures games field, agreed to join Wizards of the Coast as vice president of miniatures.

Peter Adkison, president of Wizards of the Coast, said, "We view miniatures as a critical component in the future of our roleplaying games, and we are thrilled to have an expert such as Bob Watts develop this new division for us. We look forward to his leadership in creating a compelling new line of roleplaying miniatures."



June Web Site Events

To join the fun in the TSR website chat room, just download the proper plugin for your internet browser, learn how to use the chat commands, and create a username at **http://tsronline.wizards.com/chat/data/html/user/addnewuser.shtml**

After you've installed the plugin and have your username, enter the chat site at **http://tsronline.wizards.com/chat/world/html/login.html**

Once you're in the chat site, type **/GO EVENTS** for the Events room.

6/4 *DUNGEON® Adventures & DRAGON® Magazine* Chat, with Chris Perkins and Dave Gross. 10 P.M. ET

6/11 DRAGONLANCE® 15th *Classic Anniversary Edition* Chat, with Stan!, Miranda Horner, and Steve Miller 7 P.M. ET

6/12 *Totally Twisted Trivia*, TSR games, rules, and settings questions, with prizes! 11:59 P.M. ET

6/25 *Return to the Keep on the Borderlands* Chat with designer John Rateliff 7 P.M. ET

6/26 *Totally Twisted Trivia*, 11:59 P.M. ET

ProFiles

RICH BAKER

Fun is the name of the game for creative director Rich Baker.

by Stephen Kenson

Rich Baker's career is a gamer's dream come true. Born and raised in Florida, Baker moved with his family to New Jersey at age ten. He attended Virginia Tech and graduated in 1988 with a degree in English, receiving a commission as an ensign in the U.S. Navy. After serving for three years as a surface warfare officer on board the USS *Tortuga*, Rich left the Navy as a lieutenant (junior grade) and married his college sweetheart, Kim Rohrbach. Looking for a new career, Rich found it quite unexpectedly at TSR.

"I'd been playing the AD&D® game off and on since 1979. When I decided to leave the Navy, I sent TSR my résumé just for the pure hell of it. TSR sent me back a writing test, which I must have done pretty well on, since they brought me out for an interview in September of 1991. I'd never published a word before then or even worked the convention circuit, but they hired me anyway. I've been with TSR ever since."

Rich has published over thirty game products and many magazine articles since coming to TSR. He started out as a writer for game products like *The Rock of Bral* for the SPELLJAMMER® line, along with material for the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, PLANESCAPE®, and RAVENLOFT® settings.

In 1994, he co-designed the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign setting, which won an Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Supplement in 1995. "I'm very proud of it. It represents an entirely new approach to the traditional fantasy roleplaying campaign, and the world itself is filled with a strong sense of history and reality."

Rich also oversaw the development of the PLAYER'S OPTION® series of AD&D rules expansions. "I greatly enjoyed the work I did on the *World Builder's Guidebook*, in particular," he says.

From these successes, Rich went on to co-design the ALTERNITY® Science Fiction game. "As much as I am proud of my other work, I probably learned the most from the work Bill [Slavicsek] and I put into the ALTERNITY game system. Designing a new roleplaying game from the ground up is an immensely complicated undertaking, and I'm very pleased with the way it turned out." Since his work on the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* and *Gamemaster Guide*, Rich has worked on the STAR*DRIVE® setting and various other ALTERNITY products, including the *ALIEN COMPENDIUM*™ book, *The Arms and Equipment Guide*, and *The Last Warhulk*.

"A couple of years ago, I got a chance to try my hand at fiction. My first novel, *Easy Betrayals*, was published in June of 1998; it's part of the nine-book DOUBLE DIAMOND TRIANGLE™ series. My second book, *The Shadow Stone*, came out in October of 1998; my third novel, *Zero Point*, is due out in June of 1999."

Zero Point is a science fiction novel set in the STAR*DRIVE universe. In it, a bounty hunter named Sokolov takes an assignment to recover Monashi, a top-notch computer engineer for HelixTech. In the process of tracking her down, Sokolov stumbles across an alien derelict from an unknown race, something extraordinarily valuable.

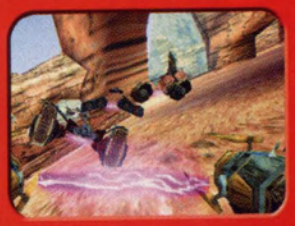
Sokolov and Monashi develop a relationship over time, but there's still a lot of conflict between them. "The characters really make the story," Rich says. "There are some intense personal relationships, making it more than just a space opera shoot 'em up."

Rich is currently the Creative Director for the ALTERNITY, STAR*DRIVE, and DARK•MATTER™ game lines. "I have a little bit of input on a lot of projects now, instead of a lot of input on one project at a time. I've got to take a step back and let the designers and editors do their jobs and help them out with the big issues. It's a challenging change of pace for me," says Rich.

The DARK•MATTER setting, due in November of 1999, focuses on conspiracies and paranormal activity. "I think it showcases the diversity of the ALTERNITY game system," Rich says. "We're really pushing the limit on our production values for this project." The new *Tangents* sourcebook shows off the ALTERNITY game in another way, by presenting material on parallel universes. "There is literally nothing you can't do with it."

So what's it like having a gamer's dream job? "I get a chance to do something creative for a living," Rich says. "That's pretty cool. If you can find something that you're good at and you love to do, that's a great situation."

STAR WARS
EPISODE I
RACER



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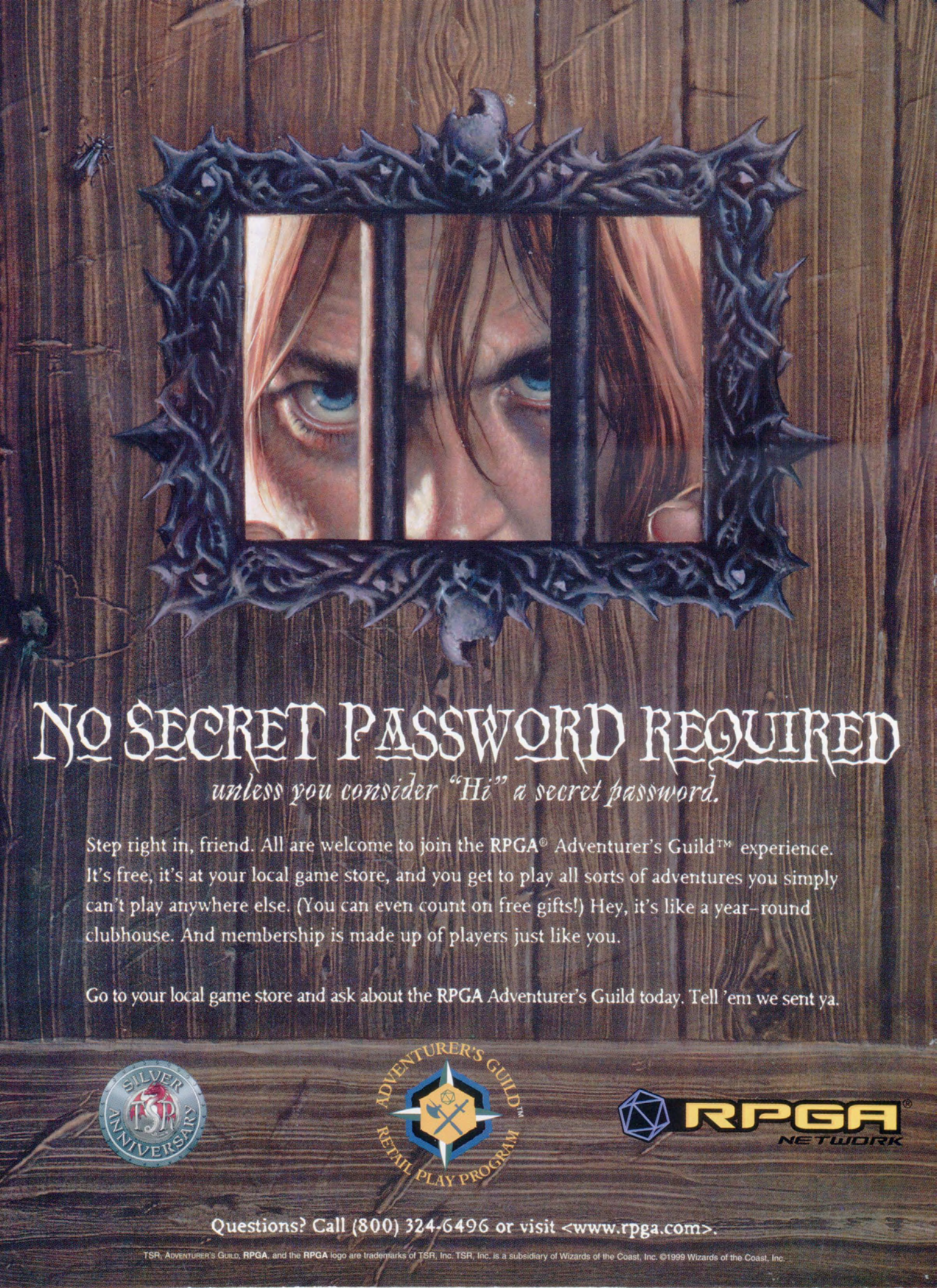
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